DIVINE CONDUCT:

OR, THE

MYSTERIE

OF

PROVIDENCE.

WHEREIN

The *Being* and *Efficacy* of *Providence* is *Asserted*, and *Vindicated*: The *Methods* of *Providence* as it passes through the several *Stages* of our Lives opened; and the proper course of improving all Providences directed, in a TREATISE upon *Psalm* 57. *Ver.* 2.

By *John Flavell*, Preacher of the Gospel.

Totam Dei Providentiam omnia tandem dirigere ad gloriam suam, & ad Electorum salutem; ac tum quiescere Spiritum Dei, cùm videt Impios damnari, ac Electos servari; ex qua utraque re Deus glorificetur. Hieron. Zanchii Miscell. Tom. 2. pag. 199.

Psal. 111. 4. *Zecher Gnasah Leniph leothau* memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum.

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Feb. 2. 1677.

TO THE

Right Honourable

WILLIAM

EARL of

BEDFORD,

Lord *RUSSEL* of *Thornehaugh*, and Knight of the moſt Noble Order of the *GARTER*.

My LORD,

IT was a weighty, and ſavoury Speech, which a Pious Pen once ſaved from your Lordſhip's lips, viz. that *You accounted the Prayers of Gods Miniſters and People, the beſt Walls about your Houſe.* He that ſo accounts, doubtleſs underſtands, that Prayer engageth Providence, *Iſa.* 45. 11. and Providence ſo engaged, is the ſureſt Munition, *Job* 1. 10. Mr. *Iſaac Amlroſe Epiſt.* to his *Ultima.*

Many great men encloſe their dwellings with an high Wall, but the foundation (as the Wiſeſt of men obſerves) is laid in their own conceits, *Prov.* 18. 11. Yea, in ſin, and crying ſin too, *Hab.* 2. 12. Of ſuch Walls we may ſay, as the *Oracle* to *Phocas*, *ean upſois ta teichē eos ouranou, endon to kakon.* If the Building emulate the Skies, yet ſin being in the bottom, all will totter.

'Tis a fond vanity, to think of enſuring a deſtiny that can control the Stars, and endure the aſſaults of Fortune, (as they love to ſpeak) whilſt Providence is

not engaged for them, no not ſo much as by a bare acknowledgement.

My Lord, It is not the vaſt bulk of an Eſtate, nor the beſt humane ſecurity in the World, but the vigilant care of Divine Providence, that guards both it, and it's Owners from the ſtroke of ruine. 'Tis the fear of God within us, and the Providence of God round about us, which make the firm and ſolid baſis of all ſanctified and durable proſperity. It is beyond all debate, that there is a Providence of God alwayes enfolding thoſe in everlaſting arms, that bear his Image. The Impreſs of that Image upon you, and the Embraces of thoſe Arms about you, will advance you higher, and ſecure you better, than your Noble Birth or Eſtate could ever do.

My Lord, Providence hath molded you, *è meliori luto*, made you both the Offspring and Head of an Illuſtrious Family, planted you in a rich and pleaſant Soyl, cauſed many Noble Branches to ſpring from you, drawn your life even unto old age, through the delights and honours of this world. And now that you have tried all thoſe things that make the faireſt pretenſions to happineſs; what have you found in all theſe painted beauties, and falſe glozing excellencies which have ſucceſſively courted you? Which of them all can you pronounce ſelf-deſirable? Which can you call *objectum par amori*? What is it to have the fleſh indulged, ſenſe gratified, fancy tickled? What have you found in meats and drinks, in ſtately Houſes and pleaſant Gardens; in Gold and Silver, in Honour and Applauſe to match the Appetite of your Nobler Soul? Surely (*My Lord*) to turn from them all with a generous diſdain, as one that knows where to find better entertainment; is much more *Noble* than wholly to immerſe, and loſe our Spirits in thoſe ſenſual fruitions, as many do, alas, too many in our dayes!

We are fallen into the dregs of time, *Senſuality* runs every where into *Atheiſm*. *Providentia peperit divitias ſed filia devoravit matrem.* The largeſſes of Providence have ſo blinded, and perfectly ſtupified the minds

minds of ſome, that they neither own a Providence, nor a God, who do *ſarkopoiein ton anthropon olon kai ten pſychen ten tou ſomatos hedonais kataſubotein*, as *Plutarch* both wittily and judiciouſly reply'd upon *Colotes* the *Epicurean*.

But bleſſed be God, there is a ſincere part, both of the *Nobles* and *Commons* of *England*, which this Gangrene hath not yet touched, and I hope, never ſhall.

My Lord, It is both your Honour and Intereſt, to be *olos tou kreittonos*, the entire and devoted ſervant of Providence. It was once the wiſh of a good man, *optarem id me eſſe Deo, quod eſt mihi manus mea.* This is the moſt Noble and Divine life that can be, to live and act in this world upon Eternal deſigns. To look upon our ſelves and what we have, as things devoted to God; not to be content that Providence ſhould ſerve it ſelf of us, (for ſo is doth even of thoſe things which underſtand nothing of it) but to ſtudy wherein we may ſerve Providence, and be inſtrumental in its hand for the good of many; this is to be truly Honourable; *quo magis quis Deo vivit, eo evadit nobilior, clarior, divinior.*

How much God hath honoured you in this reſpect, the World will underſtand better, when your Lordſhip ſhall be gathered to your Fathers, and ſleep in the duſt, then he that praiſeth, cannot be ſuſpected of flattery; nor he that is praiſed, be moved with vain glory: But the approbation of God, is infinitely better than the moſt glorious Name among men, before, or after death.

And as it is moſt *honourable* to *ſerve*, ſo you will find it moſt comfortable to *obſerve* the wayes of God in his Providence. To compoſe our ſelves to think of the *Conduct of Providence* through all the *Stages* of live we have hitherto paſſed. To note the reſults of its profound Wiſdom, the Effects of its tender Care, the diſtinguiſhing fruits of its ſpecial Bounty: To mark how Providences have gone along ſtep by ſtep with the Promiſes, and both with us, till they

have now brought us near to our Everlasting Rest, Oh how delectable! how transporting are such Meditations as these!

My Lord, It is the design of this *Manual*, to assert the *Being* and *Efficacy* of Providence against the *Atheism* of the times, and to display the Wisdom and care of the Providence of God in all the Concerns of that people who are really his. 'Tis probable, if your Lordship will stoop to such a vulgar composure, somewhat may occurr of a grateful relish to your pious mind. I confess, It is not accommodated, either in exactness of method, or elegancy of style, to gratifie the curious; not yet is it destitute of what may please and profit the truly gracious.

Should I here recite the pleasures and advantages resulting from an humble and heedful eying of the methods of Providence, it would look more like a *Book* in an *Epistle*, than an *Epistle* in a *Book*. One taste of spiritual sense will satisfie you better, than all the accurate descriptions and high *Encomiums* that the most elegant Pen can bestow upon it.

My Lord, It is not that eminent station that some persons retain (in civil respects) above the vulgar, that will enable them to penetrate the Mysteries, and relish the sweetness of Providence better than others; (for doubtless many that live immediately upon Providence for daily bread, do thereby gain a nearer acquaintance with it, than those, whose outward enjoyments flow to them in a more plentiful and stated course) but those that excel in grace and experience, those that walk and converse with God in all his dispensations towards them; these are the persons who are most fully and immediately capable of these high pleasures of the Christian life. The daily flow and increase whereof in your Lordships Noble Person and Family, is the hearty desire of

From my Study at Dartmouth *Aug.* 10. 1677.

Your Lordships most humble servant,

JOHN FLAVELL.

To

To the ingenuous

READERS.

Thoſe eſpecially that are the heedful *Obſervers* of the wayes

OF

PROVIDENCE.

Reader,

THERE are two wayes whereby the bleſſed God condeſcends to manifeſt himſelf to men, His Word, *and his* Works. *Of the written Word we muſt ſay, No words like theſe were ever written ſince the beginning of Time, which can (as one ſpeaks) take life and root in the Soul, yea, doth it as really as the ſeed doth in the ground: and are fitted to be engraffed and naturalized there, ſo as no coalition in nature can be more real than this,* James 1. 21. *This is the moſt tranſcendent and glorious* medium *of manifeſtation*; God hath magnified his word above all his name, *Pſal.* 138. 2.

However, the manifeſtations of God by his Works; *whether of* Creation *or* Providence *have their value, and glory: but the prime glory and excellency of his* Providential works *conſiſts in this, that they are the very fulfillings and real accompliſhments of his written word. By a wiſe and heedful attendance hereunto, we might learn that excellent Art, which is (not unfitly) called by ſome* Scientia architectonica, *an Art to clear the Myſterious occurrences of Providence, by reducing them to the written word, and* there *lodge them as*

[Effects

Effects *in their proper* Cauſes. *And doubtleſs, this is one of the rareſt eſſayes men could purſue againſt* Atheiſm, *to ſhew, not only how Providences concurr in a moſt obvious tendency to confirm this great Concluſion,* Thy Word is Truth; *but how it ſometimes extorts alſo the confeſſion of a* God, *and the truth of his* Word, *from thoſe very tongues which have boldly denyed it.*

Æſchilus in Tragad.

Æſchyles *the* Perſian *relating their diſcomfiture by the* Grecian *Army, makes this notable obſervation,* „ *When the* Grecian *Forces hotly purſued us,* (*ſaith he*) „ *and we muſt needs venture over the great Water* Stry- „ mon. *then frozen; but beginning to thaw; when* „ *a hundred to one we had all dyed for it, with mine* „ *eyes I then ſaw many of thoſe* Gallants *whom I had* „ *heard before ſo boldly maintain,* there was no God, „ *every one upon their knees, with eyes and hands* „ *lifted up, begging hard for help and mercy, and en-* „ *treating that the Ice might hold till they got over.* *Many thouſand ſeals hath Providence forced the very Enemies of God to ſet to his Truths; which greatly tends to our confirmation therein; but eſpecially, to ſee how the* Word *and* Providences *of God do enlighten each other; and how the Scriptures contain all thoſe Events, both great and ſmall, which are diſpoſed by Providence in their ſeaſons: And how not only the Promiſes of the Word, are in the general faithfully fulfilled to the Church in all her Exigences and Diſtreſſes; but in particular to every member of it; they being all furniſhed by Providence with multitudes of Experiences to this uſe and end. O how uſeful are ſuch obſervations!*

And as the profit and uſe, ſo the delight and pleaſure reſulting from the obſervations of Providence, is exceeding great. It will doubtleſs be a part of our entertainment in Heaven, *to view with tranſporting delight, how the deſigns and methods were laid to bring us thither: and what will be a part of our bleſſedneſs in* Heaven, *may well be allowed to have a prime ingrediency into our* Heaven *upon Earth: To ſearch for pleaſure among the due Obſervations of Providence, is to*

ſearch

ſearch for water in the Ocean: for Providence doth not only, ultimately deſign to bring you to Heaven, but (as intermediate thereunto) to bring (by this means) much of Heaven into your ſouls in the way thither.

How great a pleaſure is it to diſcern how the moſt wiſe God is providentially ſteering all to the Port of his own Praiſe, and his peoples Happineſs, whilſt the whole world is buſily employed in managing the Sails, and tugging at the Oars, with a quite oppoſite deſign and purpoſe? To ſee how they promote *his deſign by* oppoſing *it, and* fulfil *his Will by* reſiſting *it,* enlarge *his Church by* ſcattering *it, and make their reſt to come the more ſweet to their ſouls, by makeing their condition ſo reſtleſs in the world. This is pleaſant to obſerve in general: But to record and note its particular deſigns upon our ſelves; with what profound wiſdom, infinite tenderneſs, and inceſſant vigilancy it hath managed all that concerns us from firſt to laſt, is raviſhing and tranſporting.*

O what an Hiſtory might we compile of our own Experiences, whilſt with a melting heart we trace the footſteps of Providence all along the way it hath led us to this day, and ſet our Remarques upon its more eminent performances for us, in the ſeveral Stages of our Life!

Here it prevented, *and there it* delivered: *Here it* directed, *and there it* corrected. *In this it* grieved, *and in that it* relieved. *Here was the* Poiſon, *and there the* Antidote. *This Providence* raiſed *a diſmal Cloud, and that* diſpelled *it again. This* ſtraitned, *and that* enlarged. *Here a* want, *and there a* ſupply. *This Relation* withered, *and that* ſpringing *up in its room. Words cannot expreſs the high delights and gratifications, a gracious heart may find in ſuch employment as this.*

O what a world of rarities are to be found in Providence! *the blind heedleſs world makes nothing of them: they cannot find* one ſweet bit, *where a gracious ſoul would make* a rich feaſt. Plurarch *relates very exactly,*

exactly, *how* Timoleon *was miraculously delivered from the conspiracy of two Murderers, by their meeting in the very nick of time a certain person, who to revenge the death of his Father, killed one of them, just as they were ready to give* Timoleon *the fatal blow, though he knew nothing of the business, and so* Timoleon *escaped the danger. And what did this wonderful work of Providence think you, yield the Relator? Why, though he were one of the most learned and ingenious among the* Heathen Sages; *yet all he made of it, was only this,* The Spectators (*saith he*) wondered greatly at the Artifice and contrivance which Fortune uses. *This is all he could see in it. Had a spiritual and wise Christian had the* dissecting *and* Anatomizing *of such a work of* Providence, *what glory would it have yielded to God! What comfort and encouragement to the Soul! The* Bee *makes a sweeter meal upon one single flower, than the* Ox *doth upon the whole Meadow, where thousands of them grow.*

O Reader, if thy heart be spiritual and well stockt with experience, if thou hast recorded the wayes of Providence *towards thee, and wilt but allow thy self time to reflect upon them; what a life of pleasure maist thou live! What an Heaven upon Earth doth this way lead thee into! I will not here tell thee, what I have met in this path, lest it should seem to savour of too much Vanity;* non est religio ubi omnia patent. *There are some delights and enjoyments in the Christian life, which are and must be enclosed. But Try it thy self, Taste and See, and thou wilt need no other inducement; thine own Experience will be the most powerful Oratory to perswade thee to the study and search of* Providence.

Histories are usually read with delight: when once the fancy is catcht, a man knows not how to disengage himself from it. I am greatly mistaken, if the History of our own lives, if it were well drawn up, and distinctly perused, would not be the pleasantest History that ever we read in our lives.

The ensuing Treatise is an Essay to that purpose, in which thou wilt find some remarques set upon Providence,

dence, in its paſſage through the ſeveral Stages of our life. But Reader, thou only art able to compile the Hiſtory of Providence for thy ſelf, becauſe the memorials that furniſh it, are only in thine own hands. However, here thou maiſt find a pattern, and general Rules to direct thee in that great and difficult work, which is the very end, and deſign of this Manual.

I have not had much regard to the dreſs, and ornament in which this Diſcourſe is to go abroad, for I am debtor both to the ſtrong and weak, the wiſe and fooliſh: and in all my obſervation I have not found, that ever God hath made much uſe of laboured periods, Rhetorical flowers, and Elegancies to improve the power of Religion in the world, Yea, I have obſerved, how Providence hath ſometimes rebuked good men, when upon other Subjects they have too much affected thoſe pedantick fooleries in withdrawing from them its uſual aids, and expoſing them to ſhame; and much more may it do ſo, when it ſelf is the Subject.

Reader, if thy ſtomach be nice and ſqueaſie, and nothing will reliſh with thee, but what is ſpruce and elegant, there are ſtore of ſuch compoſures in the world, upon which thou maiſt even ſurfeit thy curious fancy: mean time there will be found ſome that will bleſs God for what thou deſpiſeſt, and make many a ſweat meal upon what thou loatheſt.

I will add no more, but my hearty prayers that Providence will direct this Treatiſe to ſuch hands, in ſuch ſeaſons, and ſo bleſs and proſper its deſign, that God may have glory, thou maiſt have benefit, and my ſelf comfort in the ſucceſs thereof, who am

Thine and the Churches ſervant in the hand of Providence,

John Flavell.

DI-

DIVINE CONDUCT,

OR THE

MYSTERIE

OF

PROVIDENCE:

Opened in a TREATISE upon Psal. 57. 2.

I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.

THe greatneſs of God is a glorious, and unſearchable Myſterie. *The Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the Earth,* Psal. 47 2. The condeſcenſion of the moſt high God to men is alſo a profound Myſterie. *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he reſpect unto the lowly,* Psal. 138, 6. But when both theſe meet together (as they do in this Scripture) they make up a matchleſs Myſterie. Here we find the moſt High Gods performing all things for a poor diſtreſſed creature.

It is the great ſupport and ſolace of the Saints in all the diſtreſſes that befall them here, that there is a Wiſe Spirit ſitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the moſt excentrical Creatures and their moſt pernicious deſigns to bleſſed and happy iſſues. And indeed it were not worth while to live in a world *keno theon kai pronoias* devoid of God and Providence.

How deeply we are concerned in this matter, will appear by that great Inſtance, which this *Pſalm* preſents us with.

It was compoſed (as the Title notes) by *David* prayer-wiſe, when he hid himſelf from *Saul* in the *Cave:* And is inſcribed with a double Title, *Altaſchith Michtam of David. Altaſchith* refers to the *ſcope*, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the ſubject matter.

Altaſchith *ne perdas, ſcil. vel* 1. Saulem; *repreſſit enim ſuos* David *qui incitabant ipſum ut* Saulem *perderet. vel* 2. *me ô Deus*, Geirus in loc.

The former ſignifies *deſtroy not*, or let there be no ſlaughter, and may either refer to *Saul*, concerning whom he gave charge to his ſervants not to deſtroy him; or rather, it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his ſoul in this pathetical ejaculation, *Altaſchith* deſtroy not.

The later Title *Michtam* ſignifies a golden ornament, and ſo is ſuited to the choice and excellent matter of the *Pſalm*, which much more deſerves ſuch a Title, than *Pythagoras* his golden Verſes did.

Three things are remarkable in the former part of the *Pſalm. Viz.* (1) His extream danger. (2) His earneſt addreſs to God in that extremity. (3) The Arguments he pleads with God in that addreſs.

Michtam *ornamentum aureum vel aureolum carmen à Kethem.* (i.e.) *aurum optimum; quia Pſalmus hic preciosus eſt inſtar auri.* Burgenſis.

(1.) His extream danger, expreſſed both in the Title, and body of the *Pſalm*. The Title tells us, this *Pſalm* was compoſed by him when he hid himſelf from *Saul* in the *Cave*. This Cave was in the Wilderneſs of *Engedi* among the broken Rocks where the wild Goats inhabited, an obſcure and deſolate hole; yet even thither the Envy of *Saul* perſued him, 1 *Sam.* 24. 1, 2. And now he that had been ſo long hunted as a Partridge upon the Mountains, ſeems to be encloſed in the net; for the place was begirt with his Enemies, and having in this place no out let another way, and *Saul* himſelf entring into the mouth of this Cave, in the ſides and creeks whereof he and his men lay hid and ſaw him; judge to how great an extremity, and to what a deſperate ſtate things were now brought:

Cum autem locum in quo latebat cinctum eſſe ab exercitu Saulis videret, nec jam ullum effugium pateret, quod antea ſemper in ſimilibus periculis fecerat: nunc quoque ad Deum confugit. Molerus in loc.

Well

Well might he ſay, as it is ver. 4. *My ſoul is among Lyons, and I lye even among them that are ſet on fire.* What hope now remained? What but immediate deſtruction could be expected?

(II.) Yet this frights him not out of his faith and duty, but betwixt the Jaws of death he prays, and earneſtly addreſſes himſelf to God for mercy, v. 1. *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful unto me.* This excellent *Pſalm* was *compoſed* by him, when there was enough to *diſcompoſe* the beſt man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the Supplicant. Mercy, Mercy! nothing but Mercy, and that exerting it ſelf in an extraordinary way, can now ſave him from ruine.

(III.) The Arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this diſtreſs, are very conſiderable.

(1.) He pleads his reliance upon God, as an Argument to move mercy. *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my ſoul truſteth in thee; yea in the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be overpaſt*, v. 1. This his truſt and dependance on God, though it be not Argumentative in reſpect of the dignity of the *Act*; yet it is ſo in reſpect, both of the nature of the *Object*, a compaſſionate God, who will not expoſe any that take ſhelter under his wings; and in reſpect of the *Promiſe*, whereby protection is aſſured to them that fly to him for ſanctuary, Iſa. 26. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee, becauſe he truſteth in thee.* Thus he encourages himſelf from the conſideration of that God, to whom he betakes himſelf.

(2.) He pleads former experiences of his help in paſt diſtreſſes, as an Argument encouraging hope under the preſent ſtrait, ver. 2. *I will cry unto God moſt high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

In which words I ſhall conſider two things,

1. The Duty reſolved upon;
2. The Encouragement to that reſolution.

(1.) The duty reſolved upon; *I will cry unto God.* Crying unto God, is an expreſſion that doth not only denote *Prayer*, but *intenſe* and *fervent* prayer. To *cry*, is to pray in an holy paſſion; and ſuch are uſually ſpeeding prayers, *Pſal.* 18. 6. and *Heb.* 5. 7.

(2.) The Encouragements to this Reſolution, and theſe are twofold.

1. Objective, and 2. Subjective, taken from The Soveraignty of God. The Experience he had of his *Providence.*

(1.) The Soveraignty of God, I *will cry unto God moſt High.* Upon this he acts his faith in Extremity of danger. *Saul* is high, but God the moſt high; and without his permiſſion, he is aſſured *Saul* cannot touch him. He had none to help; and if he had, he knew God muſt firſt help the helpers, or they cannot help him. He had no means of defence or eſcape before him, but the Moſt High is not limited by means. This is a ſingular prop to faith, *Pſal.* 59. 9.

(2.) The Experience of his *Providence* hitherto: *unto God that performeth all things for me.*

Ganad perfecit, defecit, deſiit, Pagnin. Buxtorf.

The word which we tranſlate (*performeth*) comes from a root, that ſignifies both to *perfect*, and to *deſiſt* or *ceaſe.* For when a buſineſs is performed and perfected, the Agent then ceaſes and deſiſts from working: he puts to the laſt hand, when he finiſhes the work. To ſuch an happy iſſue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him incouragement, that he will ſtill be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he ſpeaks, Pſal. 138. 8. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*

The *Septuagint* renders it by *tòn evergaſonta me* who *profiteth*, or *benefiteth* me. And it is a certain Truth, that all the reſults and iſſues of Providence are profitable and beneficial to the Saints. But the Supplement

plement in our Tranſlation well receives the importance of the place, *Who performeth all things.* And it involves the moſt ſtrict and proper notion of *Providence*, which is nothing elſe but the performance of God's gracious purpoſes, and promiſes to his people, And therefore *Vatablus* and *Muis* ſupply and fill up the room which the conciſeneſs of the Original leaves, with *quæ promiſit*, I will cry unto God moſt high, unto God that performeth *the things which he hath promiſed.* Payment is the performance of promiſes. Grace makes the promiſe, and Providence the payment.

Piſcator fills it with *benignitatem & miſericordiam ſuam*, unto God that performeth *his kindneſs and mercy.* But ſtill it ſuppoſes the mercy performed, to be contained in the promiſe. Mercy is ſweet in the promiſe, and much more ſo in the *providential performance* of it to us.

Caſtalio's Supplement comes nearer to ours, *rerum mearum Tranſactorem*, I will cry unto God moſt high, unto God *the Tranſactor of my affairs.*

But our *Engliſh*, making out the ſenſe by an univerſal particle, is moſt fully agreeable to the ſcope of the Text. For it cannot but be a great encouragement to his faith, that God had tranſacted *all things*, or performed *all things* for him; this *Providence* that never failed him in any of the ſtraits that ever he met with (and his life was a life of many ſtraits) he might well hope it would not now fail him, though this were an extraordinary and matchleſs one.

Bring we then our thoughts a little cloſer to this Scripture; and it will give us a fair and lovely proſpect of *Providence.*

in its	1. Univerſal 2. Effectual 3. Beneficial 4. Encouraging	Influence upon the Affairs and Concerns of the Saints.

The expreſſion imports the *Univerſal* Intereſt and (1.)
Influence of *Providence* in and upon all the Concerns

and Intereſts of the Saints. It hath not only its hand in this or that; but *in all* that concerns them. It hath its eye upon every thing that relates to them throughout their lives, from firſt to laſt. Not only great, and more important, but the moſt minute and ordinary affairs of our lives are tranſacted and managed by it. It touches all things that touch us, whether more nearly or remotely.

(2.) It diſplaies the *Efficacy* of *Providential Influences*. *Providence* doth not only undertake, but (performeth) and perfects what concerns us. It goes through with its deſigns, and accompliſheth what it begins. No difficulty ſo clogs it, no croſs accident falls in its way, but it carries its deſign through it. Its motions are irreſiſtible and uncontrollable, he *performs* it for us.

(3.) And (which is ſweet to conſider) all its products and iſſues are exceeding *beneficial* to the Saints. It performs all things (for them). 'Tis true, we often prejudge its works, and unjuſtly cenſure its deſigns, and under many of our ſtraits and troubles we ſay, *all theſe things are againſt us:* but indeed *Providence* neither doth, nor can do any thing that is really againſt the true Intereſt and good of the Saints. For what are the works of *Providence*, but the execution of God's Decree, and the fulfilling of his Word? and there can be no more in Providence, than is in them. Now there is nothing but *good* to the *Saints* in God's *purpoſes* and *promiſes*; and therefore, whatever *Providence* doth in their Concernments, it muſt be (as the Text ſpeaks) *the performance of all things for them.*

(4.) And if ſo, how *chearing*, *ſupporting*, *and encouraging* muſt the conſideration of theſe things be in a day of diſtreſs and trouble? What life and hope will it inſpire our Hearts and Prayers withal, when great preſſures lie upon us? It had ſuch a chearing influence upon the *Pſalmiſt* at this time, when the ſtate of his affairs was to the eye of ſenſe and reaſon forlorn, and deſperate: there was now but an hairs breadth (as we ſay) betwixt him and ruine.

A potent, enraged, and implacable Enemy had driven

driven him into the hole of a rock, and was come after him into that hole, yet now whilſt *his ſoul is among Lyons*, whileſt he lies in a cranny of the Rock, expecting every moment to be drawn out to death, the reflections he had upon the gracious performances of the Moſt High for him, from the beginning to that moment, ſupport his ſoul, and inſpire hope and life into his prayers, *I will cry unto God moſt high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

The amount of all you have in this Doctrinal Concluſion.

DOCT.

That it is the duty of the Saints, eſpecially in times of ſtraits, to reflect upon the performances of Providence for them in all the ſtates, and through all the ſtages of of their lives.

The Church in all the works of mercy, owns *the hand of God*, Iſ. 26. 12. *Lord, thou haſt wrought all our works in* (or for) *us.* And ſtill it hath been the pious, and conſtant practice of the Saints in all generations, to preſerve the memory of the more famous, and remarkable *providences* that have befallen them in their times, as a precious treaſure. *If thou be a Chriſtian indeed, I know thou haſt, if not in thy book, yet certainly in thy heart a great many precious favours upon record; the very remembrance and rehearſal of them is ſweet: how much more ſweet was the actual enjoyment?* Baxter's Saints Reſt, p. 768. Thus *Moſes* by divine direction wrote a memorial of that victory obtained over *Amalek* as the fruit and return of prayer, and built there an *Altar* with this Inſcription *Jehovah Niſſi, The Lord my Banner*, Exod. 17. 14, 15. Thus *Mordecai* and *Heſter* took all care to perpetuate the memory of that ſignal deliverance from the plot of *Haman*, by ordaining the feaſt of *Purim*, as an *Anniverſary throughout every generation, every family, every Province, and every City, that thoſe days of Purim ſhould not fail from among the* Jews, *nor the me-*

morial of them periſh from their ſeed, Eſth. 9. 28. For this end you find *Pſalms* indited, to bring remembrance, *Pſal.* 70. the Title. Parents giving ſuitable names to their Children, that every time they looked upon them, they might refreſh the memory of Gods mercies. 1 *Sam.* 1. 20. The very places where eminent Providences have appeared, new named, upon no other deſign, but to perpetuate the memorial of thoſe ſweet Providences which ſo refreſhed them there: Thence *Bethel* took its name, *Gen.* 28. 19. And that well of water where *Hagar* was ſeaſonably refreſhed by the Angel in her diſtreſs, *Beer-la-hai-roi*, the well of him that liveth and looketh on me, *Gen.* 16. 14. Yea, the Saints have given, and God hath aſſumed to himſelf new Titles upon this very ſcore and account; *Abraham's Jehovah jireh*, and *Gideon's Jehovah ſhallum* were aſcribed to him upon this reaſon. And ſometimes you find the Lord ſtiles himſelf; The God that brought *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*: then the Lord that brought them out of *Egypt*: then the Lord that gathered them out of the North Countrey: ſtill minding them of the gracious providences which in all thoſe places he had wrought for them.

Now there is a twofold reflection upon the *providential works of God.*

One entire and full, in the whole Complex and perfect frame thereof. This bleſſed ſight is reſerved for the perfect ſtate. It is in that Mount of God, where we ſhall ſee both the *Wilderneſs* and *Canaan*: the glorious Kingdom into which we are come, and the way through which we were led into it. There the Saints ſhall have a raviſhing view of that beautiful frame, and every part ſhall be diſtinctly diſcerned, as it had its particular uſe, and as it was connected with the other parts, and how effectually and orderly they all wrought to bring about that bleſſed deſign of their ſalvation, according to the promiſe, Rom, 8. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God*, &c. For it is certain, no Ship at Sea keeps more exactly by the Compaſs which directs its courſe

(1.) When the Records of Eternity ſhall be expoſed to view, all

courſe, than *Providence* doth by that *Promiſe*, which is its *Cynoſura* and *Pole-ſtar*.

The other partial and imperfect in the way to glory. where we only view it in its ſingle acts, or at moſt: in ſome branches and more obſervable courſe of actions.

Betwixt theſe two is the ſame difference, as betwixt the ſight of the diſ-jointed wheels and ſcattered pins of a Watch, and the ſight of the whole united in one frame, and working in one orderly motion: or, betwixt an ignorant Spectators viewing ſome more obſervable veſſel or joint of a diſſected body; and the accurate *Anatomiſt*'s diſcerning the courſe of all the veins and arteries of the body, as he follows the ſeveral branches of them through the whole, and plainly ſees the proper places, figure, and uſe of each, with their mutual reſpect to one another.

O how raviſhing and delectable a ſight is that! to behold at one view the whole deſign of Providence, and the proper place, and uſe of every ſingle act, which we could not underſtand in this world: for what Chriſt ſaid to *Peter*, *Joh.* 13. 7. is as applicable to ſome providences in which we are now concerned, as it was to that particular action; *What I do thou knoweſt not now, but hereafter thou ſhalt know it.* All the dark intricate puzling Providences at which we were ſometimes ſo ſtumbled. and ſometimes amazed, which we could neither reconcile with the promiſe, nor with each other; nay, which we ſo unjuſtly cenſured and bitterly bewailed, as if they had fallen out quite croſs to our happineſs: we ſhall then ſee to be unto us, as the difficult paſſage through the Wilderneſs was unto *Iſrael*, *the right way to a City of habitation*, Pſalm 107. 7.

And yet though our preſent views and reflections upon Providence be ſo ſhort and imperfect in compariſon of that in Heaven, yet ſuch as it is under all its preſent diſadvantages, it hath ſo much excellency and ſweetneſs in it, that I may call it a little Heaven, or as *Jacob* called his *Bethel*; *the Gate of Heaven*. 'T is certainly an high-way of walking with God in this

the counſels and reſults of 2. that profound wiſdom looked into; how will it tranſport? when it ſhall be diſcerned, Loe, thus were the deſigns laid: here were the apt juncures and admirable dependencies of things, which when acted upon the ſtage of time, ſeem'd ſo perplext and intricate, *Howes B'leſſedneſs*, p. 76.

world, and as ſweet communion may a ſoul enjoy with him in his *Providences*, as in any of his *Ordinances*. How often have the hearts of its obſervers been melted into tears of joy, at the beholding of its wiſe and unexpected productions! How often hath it convinced them, upon a ſober recollection of the events of their lives, that if the Lord had left them to their own counſels, they had as often been their own tormenters, if not executioners? Into what, and how many fatal miſchiefs had they precipitated themſelves, if Providence had been as ſhort ſighted as they? They have given it their hearty thanks, for conſidering their *Intereſt* more than their *Importunity*, and not ſuffering them to periſh by their own deſires.

Luther was bold to preſcribe to God, but at laſt ſaid, *viſit haud dubiè hanc ſapientiam Dominus, & dixit, Deus ſum, non ſequax.*

The benefits of adverting the works of Providence, are manifold and unſpeakable; as in its place we ſhall ſhew you. But not to entangle the thread of the diſcourſe, I ſhall caſt it into this method.

(1.) Firſt, I ſhall prove, that the Concernments of the Saints in this world, are certainly conducted by the Wiſdom and care of ſpecial Providence.

(2.) Secondly, I will ſhew you, in what particular concernments of theirs this providential care is evidently diſcovered.

(3.) Thirdly, That it is the duty of Saints to advert, and heedfully obſerve theſe performances of Providence for them in all their Concernments.

(4.) Fourthly, In what manner this duty is to be performed by them.

(5.) Fiftly, What ſingular benefits reſult to them from ſuch obſervations.

And then apply the whole in ſuch Uſes, as offer themſelves from the Point.

The Frſt General Head.

(1.) Firſt, I ſhall undertake the proof and defenſe of this great truth, *That the affairs of the Saints in this world are certainly conducted by the Wiſdom and care of ſpecial Providence.*

And

And herein *I* addreſs my ſelf with cheerfulneſs, to perform (as *I* am able) a ſervice for that Providence, which had throughout my life performed all things for me, as the Text ſpeaks.

There is a twofold conſideration of Providence according to is twofold Object, and manner of diſpenſation; the one is *general*, exerciſed about all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate; the other *ſpecial* and peculiar. Chriſt hath an univerſal Empire over all things, *Eph.* 1. 22. the head of the whole World, by way of *dominion*: but an head to the Church, by way of *union* and *ſpecial influence*. Joh. 17, 2. *the Saviour of all men, but eſpecially of them that believe*, 1 Tim. 4. 10. The Church is his *ſpecial* care and charge; he rules the world for its good, as an head conſulting the welfare of the body.

Heathens generally denied Providence, and no wonder, ſince they denied a God: for the ſame Arguments that prove one, will prove the other. *Ariſtotle* the Prince of Heathen *Philoſophers*, could not by the utmoſt ſearch of reaſon, find out the Worlds orginal, and therefore concludes, it was from Eternity. The *Epicureans* did in a ſort acknowledge a God, but yet denied a Providence, and wholly excluded him from any intereſt or concern in the affairs of the world, as being inconſiſtent with the felicity and tranquillity of the Divine Being to be diverted and cumbered with the care and labour of government. This aſſertion is ſo repugnant to reaſon, that it is a wonder themſelves bluſht not at its abſurdity; but I gueſs at the deſign, and one of them ſpeaks it out in broad language. *Itaque impoſuiſtis cervicibus noſtris ſempiternum dominum, quem dies & noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, & cogitantem, & animadvertentem, & omnia ad ſe pertinere putantem, curioſum & plenum negotii Deum? Vell. apud Cicer. de Natura Deorum.* They foreſaw, that the conceſſion of a Providence, would impoſe an eternal yoak upon their necks, by making them accountable for all they did to an higher Tribunal: and that they muſt neceſſarily paſs

the time of their ſojourning here in fear, whilſt all their thoughts, words and wayes were ſtrictly noted and recorded, in order to an account by an All-ſeeing & righteous God: and therefore laboured to perſwade themſelves that was not, which they had no mind ſhould be. But theſe Atheiſtical and fooliſh conceits fall flat before the undeniable evidence of this ſo great and clear a truth. Now,

My buſineſs here, is not ſo much to deal with profeſſed *Atheiſts*, who deny the exiſtence of God; and conſequently deride all evidences brought from Scripture, of the extraordinary events, that fall out in favour of that people that are called His: but rather to convince thoſe, that profeſſedly own all this; yet never having taſted Religion by experience, ſuſpect at leaſt, that all theſe things which we call *ſpecial providences* to the Saints, are *but natural events*, or meer *contingencies*: and thus whilſt they profeſs to own a God, and a Providence, (which profeſſion is but the effect of their education) they do in the mean time live like *Atheiſts*; and both think and act, as if there were no ſuch things: and really I doubt, this is the caſe of the far greateſt part of the men of this generation.

But if it were indeed ſo, that the affairs of the World in general, and more eſpecially thoſe of the Saints, were not conducted by divine Providence, but (as they would perſwade us) by the ſteady courſe of natural cauſes: beſide which, if at any time we obſerve any event to fall out, it's meerly caſual and contingent, or that which proceeds from ſome hidden and ſecret cauſe in nature: If this indeed were ſo, let them that are tempted to believe it, rationally ſatisfie the following demands.

Firſt Demand.

How comes it to paſs, that ſo many ſignal mercies and deliverances have befallen the people of God, above the power, and againſt the courſe of natural cau-

cauſes: to make way for which, there hath been a ſenſible ſuſpenſion and ſtop put to the courſe of nature? It is moſt evident, that no natural effect can exceed the power of its natural cauſe. Nothing can give to another, more than it hath in it ſelf: And it is as clear, that whatſoever acts naturally, acts neceſſarily: Fire burns *ad ultimum ſui poſſe* to the uttermoſt of its power: Waters overflow, and drown all that they can. Lions and other rapacious and cruel Beaſts, eſpecially when hungry, tear and devour their prey: And for *Arbitrary* and rational Agents, they alſo act according to the principles and Laws of their natures. A wicked man when his heart is fully ſet in him, and his will ſtands in a full bent of reſolution, will certainly (if he have power in his hand, and opportunity to execute his conceived miſchief) give it vent, and perpetrate the wicked devices of his heart: for having once conceived miſchief, and *travailing in pain with it* (according to the courſe of nature) he muſt *bring it forth*; as it is *Pſal.* 7. 14. But if any of theſe inanimate, brutal, or rational agents, when there is no natural obſtacle or *remora*, have their power ſuſpended, and that when the effect is near the birth, and the deſign at the very article of execution, ſo that though they would, yet cannot hurt; to what think you is this to be aſſigned and referred? Yet ſo it hath often been ſeen, where Gods intereſt hath been immediately concerned in the danger and evil of the event. The Sea divided it ſelf in its own Channel, and made a wall of water, on each ſide, to give Gods diſtreſſed *Iſrael* a ſafe paſſage, and that not in a calm, but when the Waves thereof roared; * as it is *Iſa.* 51. 15. The fire when blown up to the moſt intenſe and wehement flame, had no power to ſinge one hair of Gods faithful Witneſſes, when at the ſame inſtant it had power to deſtroy their intended *Executioners* at a greater diſtance, *Dan.* 3. 22. Yea, we find it hath ſometime

* How hard was *Porphyry* put to it, when inſtead of a better, this pre-

tence muſt ſerve the turn, That *Moſes* taking the advantage of a lo water unknown to the *Egyptians*, paſſed over the people thereat: as *Moſes* a ſtranger, were better acquainted there, than the *Egyptian* Native

been

been sufficient to consume, but not to torment the body; as in that known instance of blessed *Bayncham*, who told his Enemies, The flames were to him as a bed of Roses. The hungry Lions put off their natural fierceness, and became gentle and harmless, when *Daniel* was cast among them for a prey. The like account the Church Story gives us of *Polycarpe*, and *Dionysius Areopagita*, whom the fire would not touch, but stood after the manner of a Ship-man's sail filled with the wind about them.

Acts and Mon. Vol. 1. p. 55.

Are these things according to the course and Law of Nature? To what secret natural cause, can they be ascribed? In like manner, we find the vilest, and fiercest of wicked men, have been withheld by an invisible hand of restraint from injuring the Lords people. By what secret cause in nature, was *Jeroboam's* hand dried up, and made inflexible at the same instant it was stretched out against the Man of God? 1 *King.* 13. 4. No wild Beasts rend and devour their prey more greedily, than wicked men would destroy the people of God that dwell among them, were it not for this providential restraint upon them. So the *Psalmist* expresses his case in the words following my Text, *My soul is among Lyons, and I lye among them that are set on fire.* The *Disciples* were sent forth as Sheep into the midst of *Wolves*, *Mat.* 10. 16. It will not avail in this case to object, Those miraculous events depend only upon Scripture testimony, which the *Atheist* is not concluded by: for beside all that may be alledged for the Authority of that testimony (which is needless to produce to men that own it) what is it less that every eye sees, or may see at this day? Do we not behold a weak defenceless handful of men, wonderfully, and (except this way) unaccountably preserved from ruine in the midst of potent, enraged and truculent enemies, that fain would, but cannot destroy them; when as yet, no natural impediment can be assigned why they cannot?

And if this pose us, what shall we say, when we see events produced in the world for the good of Gods chosen,

choſen, by thoſe very hands and means, which were intentionally imployed for their ruine? Theſe things are as much beſide the intentions of their enemies, as they are above their own expectations; yet ſuch things are no rarities in the world. Was not the Envy of *Joſeph's* brethren, the curſed Plot of *Haman*, the Decree procured by the envy of the *Princes* againſt *Daniel*, with many more of the like nature, all turned by a ſecret and ſtrange hand of providence, to their greater advancement and benefit: their Enemies lifted them up to all that honour and preferment they had.

Second Demand.

How is it (if the Saints Concerns are not ordered by a ſpecial divine Providence) *that natural cauſes unite and aſſociate themſelves for their relief and benefit in ſo ſtrange a manner as they are found to do*? It is undeniably evident, that there are marvellous coincidencies of Providence, confederating and agreeing as it were, to meet and unite themſelves to bring about the good of Gods Choſen. There is a like face of things ſhewing it ſelf in divers places at that time, when any work for the good of the Church is come upon the ſtage of the world. As when the *Meſſiah* the capital mercy came to the *Temple*, then *Simeon* and *Anna* were brought thither by Providence, as witneſſes to it. So in Reformation work, when the Images were pulled down in *Holland*, one and the ſame ſpirit of zeal poſſeſſed them in every *City* and *Town*, that the work was done in a night. He that heedfully reads the *Hiſtory* of *Joſeph's* advancement to be the Lord of *Egypt*, may number in that ſtory twelve remarkable acts or ſteps of Providence, by which he aſcended to that honour and authority: if but one of them had failed, in all likelihood the Event had done ſo too: but every one fell in its order, exactly keeping its own time and place. So in the Churches deliverance from the plot of *Haman*, we find no leſs than ſeven acts of Providence

dence concurring ſtrangely to produce it, as if they had all met by appointment and conſent, to break that ſnare for them: one thing ſo aptly ſuiting with, and making way for another, that every heedful obſerver muſt needs conclude, this cannot be the effect of *caſualty*, but wiſe *counſel*. Even as in viewing the accurate ſtructure of the body of a man, the figure, poſition, and mutual reſpects of the ſeveral members and veſſels hath convinced ſome, (and is ſufficient to convince all) that it was the effect of divine Wiſdom and power: in like manner, if the admirable adaptation of the means and inſtruments employed for mercy to the people of God be heedfully conſidered, who can but confeſs, that as there are tools of all ſorts and ſizes in the ſhop of Providence; ſo there is a moſt skilful hand that uſes them; and that they could no more produce ſuch effects of themſelves, than the Ax, Saw, or Chiſell can cut or carve a rude logg into a beautiful figure, without the hand of a skilful Artificer?

We find by manifold inſtances, that there certainly are ſtrong combinations, and prediſpoſitions of perſons and things, to bring about ſome iſſue and deſign for the benefit of the Church, which themſelves never thought of: they hold no intelligence, communicate not their counſels to each other, yet meet together, and work together as if they did: which is, as if ten men ſhould all meet together at one place, and in one hour, about one and the ſame buſineſs, and that without any fore-appointment betwixt themſelves; can any queſtion, but ſuch a meeting of means and inſtruments is certainly, though ſecretly over-ruled by ſome Wiſe inviſible Agent?

Third Demand.

If the Concerns of Gods people be not governed by ſpecial Providence, *Whence is it, that the moſt apt and powerful means imployed to deſtroy them are rendered*

dered ineffectual, and weak contemptible means imployed for their defence and comfort, crowned with ſucceſs? This could never be, if things were wholly ſwayed by the courſe of nature. If we judge by that rule, we muſt conclude, the more apt and powerful the means are, the more ſucceſsful and proſperous they muſt needs be; and where they are inept, weak, and contemptible, nothing can be expected from them: thus reaſon layes it according to the rules of nature; but Providence croſſes its hands, as *Jacob* did in bleſſing the Sons of *Joſeph*, and orders quite contrary iſſues and events. Such was the mighty power and deep policy uſed by *Pharaoh* to deſtroy Gods *Iſrael*, that to the eye of reaſon, it was as impoſſible to ſurvive it, as for crackling thorns to abide unconſumed amidſt devouring flames; by which Emblem, their miraculous preſervation is expreſſed, *Exod.* 3. 2. the buſh was all in a flame, but no conſumption of it. The Heathen *Roman* Emperours, who made the World tremble; and ſubdued the Nations under them; have employed all their power and policy againſt the poor, naked, defenceleſs Church, to ruine it; yet could not accompliſh it, *Rev.* 12. 3, 4. O the Seas of blood that *Heathen Rome* ſhed in the ten perſecutions! yet the Church lives, and when the Dragon gave his power to the Beaſt, *Rev.* 13. 2. (*i. e*) the State of *Rome* became Antichriſtian, O what ſlaughters have been made by the Beaſt in all his dominions; ſo that the Holy Ghoſt repreſents him, as drunken with the blood of the Saints, *Rev.* 17. 6. And yet all will not do: the gates (*i e.*) the powers and policies of Hell cannot prevail againſt it. How manifeſt is the care and power of Providence herein? Had half that power been imployed againſt any other people, it had certainly ſwallowed them up immediately, or in the hundredth part of the time worn them out. How ſoon was the *Perſian* Monarchy ſwallowed up by the *Grecian*, and that again by the *Roman*? *Diocleſian* and *Maximin* in the height of their perſecution found themſelves ſo baffled by Providence, that they both reſigned

Act. & Mon. Vol. 3. *p.* 974.

reſigned the government, and lived as private men. But in this wonderful preſervation God makes good that promiſe, Jer. 30. 11. *though I make a full end of all Nations, yet will I not make a full end of Thee:* and that in Iſa. 54. 17. *no weapon formed againſt thee ſhall proſper.*

On the contrary, how ſucceſsful have weak and contemptible means been made for the good of the Church? Thus in the firſt planting of Chriſtianity in the world, by what weak and improbable inſtruments was it done? Chriſt did not chuſe the eloquent *Orators*, or men of Authority in the Courts of *Kings* and *Emperours*, but twelve poor *Mechanicks*, and Fiſhermen; and theſe not ſent together in a troop, but ſome to take one Countrey to conquer it, and ſome another: the moſt ridiculous courſe (in appearance) for ſuch a deſign as could be imagined; and yet in how ſhort a time was the Goſpel ſpread, and the Churches planted by them in the ſeveral Kingdoms of the world? This the *Pſalmiſt* foreſaw by the Spirit of Prophecy, when he ſaid, *Out of the mouth of Babes and Sucklings haſt thou ordained ſtrength, to ſtill the Enemy, and the Avenger*, Pſal. 8. 2. At the ſound of Rams horns *Jericho* is delivered into the hands of *Iſrael*: ſee *Joſh.* 6. 20. By three hundred men with their Pitchers and Lamps, the huge hoſt of *Midian* is diſcomfited, *Judges* 6. 19. The *Proteſtants* beſieged in *Beziers* in *France* are delivered by a drunken *Drummer*, who going to his Quarters at midnight, rang the Alarm-Bell of the Town, not knowing what he did; and juſt then were their enemies making their aſſault. And as weak and improbable means have been bleſſed with ſucceſs to the Church in general, ſo to the preſervation of its particular members alſo. A Spider by weaving her web over the mouth of an Oven, ſhall hide a ſervant of Chriſt, *Du Moulin* from his Enemies, who took refuge there in that Bloody *Pariſian* Maſſacre. A *Hen* ſhall ſuſtain another many dayes at the ſame time, by lodging her egg every day, in the place where he had hid himſelf from the Cutthroats. Examples might be

e eaſily multiplied in the caſe; but the truth is too plain and obvious to the obſervation of all ages to need them. And can we but acknowledge a divine and ſpecial Providence over-ruling theſe matters, when we ſee the moſt apt and potent means for the Churches ruine fruſtrated, and the moſt ſilly and contemptible means ſucceeded and proſpered for its good?

Fourth Demand.

If all things be governed by the courſe of nature, and force of natural cauſes, *How then comes it to paſs, that men are turned (like a bowle by a rub) out of the way of evil, unto which they were driving on with full ſpeed?* Good men have been engaged tn the way to their own ruine, and knew it not; but Providence hath met them in the way and preſerved them by ſtrange diverſions, the meaning of which they nnderſtood not, till the Event diſcovered it. *Paul* lay bound at *Cæſarea*, the *High Prieſt* and chief of the *Jews* requeſt *Feſtus*, that he might be brought bound to *Jeruſalem*, having laid wait in the way to kill him; but *Feſtus* (though ignorant of the plot) utterly refuſes it, but chuſes rather to go with them to *Cæſarea*, and judge him there: by this rub, their bloody deſign is fruſtrated, *Act.* 25. 3, 4.

Poſſidonius in the life of *Auguſtine*, tell us, that the good Father going to teach the people of a certain Town, took a Guide with him, to ſhew him the way; the guide miſtook the uſual road, and ignorantly fell into a by-path, by which means he eſcaped ruine by the hands of the bloody *Donatiſt*, who knowing his intention way-laid him to kill him in the road. *Poſſid. in vit. Aug. cap.* 15.

And as memorable and wonderful are thoſe rubs and diverſions wicked men have met with in the way of perpetrating the evils conceived and intended in their own hearts, *Laban* and *Eſau* came againſt *Jacob* with miſchievous purpoſes; but no ſooner are they come nigh him, but the ſhackles of reſtraint are im- Gen. 31. 24..33.

me-

mediately clapt upon them both, so that their hand cannot perform their interprizes. *Balaam* runs greedily for reward to curse *Israel*; but meets with an unexpected check at his very out-set, and though that stopt him not, but he assay'd every way to do them mischief, yet he still finds himself fetter'd by an effectual bond of restraint, that he can no way shake off, *Numb.* 22.25,38. *Saul* the High-Priest's Blood-hound, breaths out threatnings against the Church, and goes with a bloody commission towards *Damascus*, to hale the poor flock of Christ to the slaughter; but when he comes nigh the place, he meets an unexpected stop in the way, by which the mischief is not only diverted, but himself converted to Christ, *Acts* 9. 1, 2, 3, 4. Who can but see the finger of God in these things?

Fifth Demand.

If there be not an over-ruling Providence ordering all things for the good of Gods people, *How comes it to pass, that the good and evil which is done to them in this world, is accordingly repaid into the bosoms of them that are instrumental therein?*

1. How clear is it to every mans observation, that the kindnesses and benefits any have done to the Lords people, have been rewarded with full measure into their bosoms? The *Egyptian Midwives* refused to obey *Pharao's* inhumane command; and saved the Male Children of *Israel*: for this the Lord dealt well with them, and built them houses, *Exod.* 1. 21. The *Shunamite* was hospitable, and careful for *Elisha*, and God recompenced it with the desirable enjoyment of a Son, 2 *Kings* 4. 9, 17. *Rahab* hid the Spies, and was exempted from the common destruction for it, *Heb.* 11. 31. *Publius* the chief man of the Island *Melita*, courteously received and lodged *Paul* after his shipwrack: the Lord speedily repaid him for that kindness, and healed his Father, who lay sick at that time of a Bloodly Flux and Fever, *Acts* 28. 7, 8.

In like manner, we find the evils done to Gods people have been repaid, by a just retribution to their enemies.

Si ab exordio mundi, ad nostram usque memoriam percurramus historias, insignia divinæ ultionis in peccatores occurrent indicia. Alstedii Nat. Theol. p. 196.

Pharaoh and the *Egyptians* were cruel enemies to Gods *Israel*, and designed the ruine of their poor innocent babes; and God repaid it, in smiting all the first-born of *Egypt* in one night, *Exod.* 12. 29.

Haman erected a *Gallows* fifty Cubits high for good *Mordecai*, and God so ordered it, that himself and his ten Sons were hanged on it. And indeed it was but meet, that he should eat the fruit of that tree which himself had planted, *Esther* 7. 10.

Ahitophel plots against *David*, and gives counsel like an *Oracle*, how to procure his fall; and that very counsel, like a surcharged Gun, recoils upon himself, and procures his ruine: for seeing his good counsel rejected, (good politically, not morally,) it was now easie for him to guess at the issue, and so at his own fate, 2 *Sam.* 17. 23.

Charles the *Ninth* most inhumanely made the very Canals of *Paris* to stream with Protestant blood, and soon after he died miserably, his blood streaming from all parts of his body.

Stephen Gardiner, that burnt so many of Gods dear servants to ashes, was himself so scorched up by a terrible inflammation, that his very tongue was black and hung out of his mouth, and in dreadful torments ended his wretched dayes.

Maximinus that cruel *Emperour*, who set forth his *Proclamation* engraven in Brass, for the utter abolishing of the Christian Religion, was speedily smitten like *Herod*, with a dreadful judgement, swarms of Lice preying upon his Entrails, and causing such a stench, that his *Physicians* could not endure to come nigh him, and for refusing it were slain. Hundreds of like Instances might easily be produced, to confirm this Observation. And who can but see by these things, that *verily there is a God that judgeth in the Earth*?

Yea, so exact have been the *retributions* of Providence

dence to the Enemies of the Church, that not only the same persons, but the same members that have been the *instruments* of *mischief*, have been made the *subjects* of *wrath*.

The same *Arm* which *Jeroboam* stretched out to smite the Prophet, God smites. The *Emperour Julian* when he was ready to subscribe the *Edict* for the persecution of the *Christians*, was suddenly cramped in his *Knuckles*, that he could not write. *Euseb. l. 7. cap. 29.*

Mr. *Greenhill* in his Exposition upon *Ezek.* 11. tells his Auditory, that there was one then present in the Congregation, who was an eye-witness of a Woman scoffing at another for purity and holy walking, who had her tongue stricken immediately with the Palsie, and died thereof within two dayes.

Henry the Second of *France* in a great rage against the *Protestant Counsellor*, committed him to the hands of one of his Nobles to be imprisoned, and that with these words, that *he would see him burned with his own eyes*: but mark the righteous providence of God, within a few dayes after, the same Noble man, with a Lance put into his hands by the *King*, did at a *Tilting match* run the said King into one of his eyes, whereof he dyed.

Yea, Providence hath made the very place of sinning, the place of punishment, 1 King. 21. 19. *the place where Dogs licked the blood of* Naboth, *shall Dogs lick thy blood*: and it was exactly fulfilled, 2 *Kings* 9. 26. Thus *Tophet* is made a burying place for the Jews, till there was no room to bury; and that was the place where they had offered up their Sons to *Molech*, Jer. 7. 31, 32. The Story of *Nightingal* is generally known which Mr. *Fox* relates, how he fell out of the Pulpit and brake his neck, whilst he was abusing that Scripture, 1 *Joh.* 1. 10.

And thus the Scriptures are made good by Providence, whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein, and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him, *Prov.* 26. 27. and *Matth.* 7. 2. with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again.

If any ſhall yet ſay, *Theſe things may fall out caſually: That many thouſands of the Churches Enemies have dyed in peace, and their end been like other men.* *Object.*

We anſwer with *Augnſtine*, If no ſin were puniſhed here, no Providence would be believed; and if every ſin ſhould be puniſhed here, no Judgement would be expected. But that none may think theſe Events to be meerly caſual and accidental, we yet further demand. *Sol.*

Sixth Demand.

If theſe things be meerly caſual, *How is it that they ſquare and agree ſo exactly with the Scriptures in all particulars?*

We read, Amos 3. 3. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* If two men travel in one road, it's like they are agreed to go to the ſame place. Ptovidences and Scriptures go all one way: and if they ſeem at any time to go diverſe or contrary waies; be ſure, they will meet at the journeys end. There is an agreement betwixt them ſo to do.

Doth God miraculouſly ſuſpend the power of natural Cauſes, as in the *firſt Demand* was opened? Why, this is no accidental thing, but what harmonizeth with the word, Iſa. 43. 2. *When thou paſſeſt through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee. When thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee.*

Do natural Cauſes unite and aſſociate themſelves for the good of Gods people? Why, this is no more than what is contained in the Promiſes, and is but the fulfilling of that Scripture, 1 Cor. 3. 22. *All is yours, for ye are Chriſts; (i. e.)* the uſe, benefit and ſervice of all the Creatures is for you, as your need ſhall require.

Are the moſt apt and powerful means employed for their ruine fruſtrated? Who can but ſee the Scriptures ful-

fulfilled in, and expounded by ſuch Providences? Se
Iſa. 54. 15, 16, 17. and 8. 8, 9, 10. expounded b
2 *Kings* 18. 17. *&* *ſeq.*

See you at any time a rub of Providence diverti
the courſe of good men from falling into evil, or wi
ked men from committing evil; how loudly do ſuc
Providences proclaim the truth and certainty of t
Scriptures, which tell us, *That the way of man is n*
in himſelf, neither is it in him that walks to direct h
ſteps, Jer. 10, 23. and that in Prov. 16. 9.
mans heart deviſeth his way, but the Lord d
recteth his ſteps.

Do you ſee adequate retributions made to thoſe th
injure or befriend the people of God? Why, whe
you ſee all the kindneſs and love they have ſhown t
Saints returned with an Overplus into their boſom
how is it poſſible, but you muſt ſee the accompliſh
ment of theſe Scriptures in ſuch Providences? Iſa. 32.
2 Cor, 9. 6. *The liberal ſoul deviſeth liberal things, a*
by liberal things he ſhall ſtand.

And when you ſee the evils men have done, or i
tended to do to the Lords people, recoiling upon the
ſelves; he is perfectly blind, that ſees not the ha
mony ſuch Providences bear with theſe Scripture
Pſal. 140. 11, 12. *Pſal.* 7. 14, 15, 16. *Pſal.* 9. 16.

O what exact proportions do Providences a
Scriptures hold! little do men take notice of it. W
did *Cyrus* contrary to all rules of State policy free
diſmiſs the Captives, but to fulfil that Scripture, *I*
45. 13. So that it was well obſerved by One, That
God hath ſtretcht out the *Expanſum* or Firmame
over the natural; ſo he hath ſtretcht out his Wo
over the rational World. And as the Creatures
earth are influenced by thoſe heavenly bodies, ſo
all Creatures in the World influenced by the Wo
and do infallibly fulfil it, when they deſign to croſs i

Seventh Demand.

If theſe things be contingent, *How is it that t*

fall out in ſuch remarkable nicks and junctures of time, which makes them ſo greatly obſervable to all that conſider them?

We find a multitude of Providences ſo timed to a minute, that had they fallen out never ſo little ſooner or later, they had ſignified but little what now they do. Certainly, it cannot be caſualty be, but counſel, that ſo exactly nicks the opportunity. Contingencies keep to no Rules.

Contingentia verum æſtimanda eſt è cauſis proximis, ſecundis, & particularibus, non è cauſa prima, & univerſali, reſpectu cujus nihil contingens eſt, ſed omnia neceſſaria, neceſſitate immutabilitatis non cauſæ. Wendelin. Theol. p. 183.

How remarkable to this purpoſe, was the tidings brought to *Saul*, that the *Philiſtines* had invaded the Land? 1 *Sam.* 23. 27. juſt as he was ready to graſp the prey. The Angel calls to *Abraham*, and ſhews him another Sacrifice, juſt when his hand was giving the fatal ſtroke to *Iſaac*, *Gen.* 22. 10, 11. A Well of water is diſcovered to *Hagar*, juſt when ſhe had left the Child, as not able to ſee its death, *Gen.* 21. 16, 19. *Rabſhakeh* meets with a blaſting Providence, hears a rumour that fruſtrated his deſign, juſt when ready to give the ſhock againſt *Jeruſalem*, *Iſa.* 37. 7, 8. So when *Haman's* plot againſt the *Jews* was ripe, and all things ready for execution; *On that night could not the King ſleep*, Eſth. 6. 1. When the horns are ready to gore *Judah*, immediately *Carpenters* are prepared to fray them away, *Zach.* 1. 18, 19, 20, 21. How remarkable was the relief of *Rochel*, by a *Shoal* of *Fiſh* that came into the *Harbour*, when they were ready to periſh with famine, ſuch as they never obſerved before, nor after that time. Mr. *Dod* could not go to bed one night, but hath a ſtrong impulſe to viſit, (though unſeaſonably) a Neighbour Gentleman, and juſt as he came, he meets him at his door, with an halter in his pocket, juſt going to hang himſelf. Dr. *Tate* and his Wife in the *Iriſh Rebellion*, flying through the Woods with a Sucking-Child, which was juſt ready to expire; the Mother going to reſt it upon a Rock, puts her hand upon a bottle of warm Milk, by which it was preſerved. A good Woman (from whoſe mouth I received it) being driven to a great extremity, all ſupplies failing, was exceedingly plunged into unbelieving doubts and

fears, not ſeeing whence ſupplies ſhould come; when lo! in the nick of time, turning ſome things in a Cheſt, unexpectedly lights upon a piece of Gold, which ſupplied her preſent wants, till God opened another door of ſupply. If theſe things fall out caſually, how is it, they obſerve the very nick of time ſo exactly? as that it is become proverbial in Scripture, Gen. 22. 14. *In the Mount of the Lord it ſhall be ſeen.*

Eighth Demand.

Laſtly, *Were theſe things caſual and contingent, how can it be, that they ſhould fall out ſo immediately upon, and conſonantly to the prayers of the Saints? So that in many Providences, they are able to diſcern a very clear anſwer to their prayers, and are ſure they have the petitions they asked of him,* 1 John 5. 15.

Thus when the Sea divided it ſelf, juſt upon *Iſrael's* cry to Heaven, *Exod.* 14. 10. When ſo ſignal a victory is given to *Aſa*, immediately upon that pathetical cry to Heaven, *Help us O Lord our God*, 2 Chron. 14. 11, 12. When *Ahitophel* ſhall go and hang himſelf, juſt upon that prayer of diſtreſſed *David*, 2 *Sam.* 15. 31. When *Haman* ſhall fall and his plot be broken, juſt upon the Faſt kept by *Mordecai* and *Heſter*, *Eſth.* 4. 16. Our own *Speed*, in his Hiſtory of *Britain*, tells us, that *Richard* the Firſt beſieged a Caſtle with his Army, they offered to ſurrender, if he would ſave their lives; he refuſes, and threatens to hang them all: upon this an *Arbalaſter* charged his Bow with a ſquare Arrow, making firſt his prayer to God, that he would direct the ſhot, and deliver the Innocent from oppreſſion; it ſtruck the *King* himſelf, whereof he dyed, and they were delivered. *Abraham's* ſervant prayed for ſucceſs, and ſee how it was anſwered, *Gen.* 24. 45. *Peter* was caſt into priſon, and prayer was made for him by the Church, and ſee the event, *Acts* 12. 5, 6, 7, 12. I could eaſily add to theſe, the wonderful examples of the return of prayers which was obſerved in *Luther*, and Dr. *Winter* in *Ireland*, and many more; but I judge

it needless, because most Christians have a stock of experience of their own, and are well assured, that many of the Providences that befal them are, and can be no other than the return of their prayers.

And now who can be dissatisfied in this point, that wisely considers these things? Must we not conclude as it is, Job 36.7. *He withdraweth not his eye from the Righteous:* and as 2 Chron. 16.9. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.* His providences proclaim him to be a God hearing prayers.

The Second General Head.

HAving proved, That the Concernments of the Saints in this World, are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of special Providence; my next work is to shew you, *In what Affairs and Concerns of theirs, the Providence of God doth more especially appear; or what are the most remarkable performances of Providence for them in this world.*

And here I am not led directly by my Text, to speak of the most internal and spiritual performances of Providence, immediately relating to the souls of his people; though they all relate to their souls mediately and eventually; but of the more visible and external performances of Providence for them: and it is not to be supposed, I should touch all these neither; they are more than the sands; but that which I aim at, is to discourse to you some more special and more observable performances of Providence for you. And we shall begin at the beginning.

The first Performance of Providence.

I.

Providential performances in our formation and protection in the womb.

AND First, Let us consider, how well Providence hath performed the first work that ever it did for us, in our *formation* and *protection* in the *womb*. Certainly, this a very glorious and admirable performance; it's that the *Psalmist* admires, Psal. 139. 15. *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth.* The Womb is so called upon this account, because as curious Artists, when they have some choice piece in hand, perfect it in private, and then bring it into the light for all to gaze at; so it was here. And there are two things admirable in this performance of Providence for us.

(1.) *Metaphora ab acupictoribus in opere Phrygionico. Omnia operatus est dominus in pondere, & mensura.*

The rare structure and excellent composition of the body; *I am wonderfully made*; that word *Ruchampti* ------ is very full. The Vulgar renders it, *painted as with a needle*, (*i. e.*) richly embroidered with nerves and veins. Oh the curious workmanship that is in that one part the eye! How hath it forced some to acknowledge a God upon the examination of it! Providence, when it went about this work, had its model or pattern before it, according to which it molded every part, as it is, Ver. 16. *In thy Book were all my members written.* Hast thou an integral perfection and fulness of members? It is because he wrote them all in his Book, or limned out thy body, according to that exact model which he drew of thee in his own gracious purpose, before thou hadst a being: Had an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot been wanting in the platform, thou hadst now been sadly sensible of the defect: this world had been but a dungeon to thee, without those windows, thou hadst lived, as many do, an object of pity to others: if thou have low thoughts of this mercy, ask the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dumb,

dumb, the value and worth of thoſe mercies, and they will tell thee. There is a world of coſt beſtowed upon thy very body. Thou mighteſt have been caſt into another mould, and created a Worm or a Toad. I remember *Luther* tells us of two *Cardinals*, riding in great pomp to the Council of *Conſtance*, and by the way they heard a man in the fields bitterly weeping and wailing: when they came to him, they found him intently viewing an ugly *Toad*; and asking him, why he wept ſo bitterly, he told them, his heart was melted with this conſideration, that God had not made him ſuch a loathſome and deformed Creature; *hoc eſt quod amarè fleo*, ſaid he: whereupon one of them cryes out, Well ſaid the Father, *Surgent indocti, & rapient Cœlum*. The unlearned will riſe and take Heaven, and we with all our learning ſhall be caſt into Hell. No part of the *Common lump* was ſo figured and poliſht as *man* is. *Galen* gave *Epicurus* an hundred years time to imagine a more commodious ſituation, configuration, or compoſition of any one member of a humane body. And if all the *Angels* had ſtudied to this day, they could not have caſt the body of *man* into a more curious muld.

Luther in tertium præcept. There are ſome members that are *radicæ*, as the liver, heart and brain, in theſe are placed the natural, vital and animal ſpirits; theſe ſpirits are carried by the Veins, Arteries & Nerves. The Veins carry the natural (2.) Spirits from the Liver, the Arteries the vital ſpirits from the Heart, the Nerves the animal ſpirits from the Brain: other members are *official*, as the hands and

And yet all this is but the enamelling of the Caſe, or poliſhing the Casket wherein the rare Jewel lies. Providence hath not only built the houſe, but brought the Inhabitant (I mean the ſoul) into the poſſeſſion of it. A glorious piece it is, that bears the very Image of God upon it, being all in all, and all in every part. How noble are its Faculties and Affections? How nimble, various and indefatigable are its Motions? How comprehenſive is its Capacity? It's a Companion for *Angels*, nay, capable of Eſpouſals to *Chriſt*, and eternal Communion with God. It's the Wonder of Earth, and the Envy of Hell.

Suppoſe now (and why ſhould you not ſuppoſe, what you ſo frequently behold in the world?) that Providence had ſo permitted and ordered it, that thy

feet: the ſuperiour doth rule the inferiour, and the inferiour ſupport the ſuperiour: In wiſdom haſt thou made them all.

ſoul had entered into thy body with one or two of its faculties wounded and defective: Suppoſe its *Underſtanding* had been crackt; what a miſerable life hadſt thou lived in this world? neither capable of *ſervice* nor *comfort*. And truly, when I have conſidered thoſe works of Providence, in bringing into the world in all Countreys and Ages ſome ſuch ſpectacles of pity; ſome deprived of the uſe of reaſon, and differing from Beaſts, in little more than ſhape and figure; and others, though ſound in their underſtandings, yet deformed or defective in their bodies, monſtrous, miſhapen and loathſome Creatures; I can reſolve the deſign of this Providence, into nothing beſide a demonſtration of his Soveraign power; except they be deſigned as foils, to ſet off the beauty of other rare and exquiſite pieces, and intended to ſtand before your eyes, as Monitors of Gods mercy to you, that your hearts (as oft as you beheld them) might be melted into thankfulneſs for diſtinguiſhing favour to you.

Look then (but not proudly) upon thy outſide and inſide, ſee and admire what Providence hath done for thee, and how well it hath *performed* the firſt ſervice that ever it did for thee in this world. And yet, this was not all it did for thee, before thou ſaweſt this world. It preſerved thee, as well as formed thee in the womb: elſe thou hadſt been as thoſe *Embryo's* Job ſpeaks of Job 3. 11, 12. *that never ſaw the light. Abortives* go for nothing in the world, and there are multitudes of them, ſome that never had a reaſonable ſoul breathed into them; but only the rudiments, and rough draught of a body: theſe come not into the account of men, but periſh as the Beaſt doth. Others that dye in, or ſhortly after they come out of the Womb: and though their life was but for a moment, yet that moment entails an Eternity upon them: and had this been your caſe, as it is the caſe of Millions, then (ſuppoſing your ſalvation) yet had you been utterly unſerviceable to God in the world: None had been the better for you, nor you the better for any in the world.

You

You had been utterly uncapable of all that good which throughout your life you have either done to others, or receeived from others.

And if we conſider the nature of that obſcure life we lived in the womb; how ſmall an accident (had it been permitted by Providence) had extinguiſhed our life, like a Bird in the ſhell? We cannot therefore but admire the tender care of Providence over us, and ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 139. 13. *Thou haſt covered me in my Mothers womb:* and not only ſo, but as it is, Pſal. 22. 9. *Thou are he that took me out of my Mothers womb.* He preſerved thee there to the fulneſs of time, and when that time was come, brought thee ſafely through manifold hazards, into that place in the world which he from Eternity eſpied for thee. Which leads us to the ſecond performance.

The Second Performance of Providence.

II.

Providential performances with reſpect to the time and place of our Nativity.

THe ſecond great performance of Providence, for the people of God, reſpects the place, and time in which it ordered their Nativity to fall. And truly, this is no ſmall concernment to every one of us, but of vaſt conſequence, either to our good or evil, though it be little minded by moſt men. *I* am perſwaded, the thoughts of few Chriſtians penetrate deep enough into this Providence, but ſlide too ſlightly and ſuperficially over an Abyſſe of much mercy, rich and manifold mercy wrapt up in this gracious *performance* of Providence for them.

Ah friends! can you think it an indifferent thing, into what part of the Word the womb of Nature had caſt you out? Is there no odds, upon what Spot of the Creation, or in what Age of the World your lot had fallen? It may be you have not ſeriouſly bethought your ſelves about this matter. And becauſe this Point is ſo ſeldom toucht, I will therefore dive a little more

particularly and distinctly into it, and endeavour to warm your affections with a representation of the many and rich benefits you owe to this one *performance* of *Providence* for you.

And we will consider it under a double respect or relation, as it respects your present comfort in this world, and as it relates to your eternal happiness in the world to come.

(1.) This performance of Providence for you, doth very much concern your *present comfort* in this world. All the rooms in this great house are not alike pleasant and commodious for the Inhabitants of it. You read *Psal.* 74. 20. of *the dark places of the Earth*, which *are full of the habitations of cruelty*: and many such dismal places are found in the habitable Earth. What a vast tract of the world lies as a waste Wilderness?

Suppose your Mothers had brought you forth in *America*, among the *Salvage Indians*, who herd together as brute beasts; are scorched with heat, and starved with cold; being naked, destitute and defenceless. How poor, miserable and unprovided of Earthly comforts and accommodations, are many Millions of the Inhabitants of this world? What mercies do you enjoy in respect of the amænity, fertility, temperature and civility of the place of your habitation? What is it but a Garden inclosed out of a Wilderness? I may without partiality or vanity say, God hath (even upon temporal accounts) provided you with one of the healthfullest, pleasantest, and in all respects, the best furnished rooms in all the great house of this world.

Speed's Chron. Hear what out own *Chronicler* saith of it, *It is the fortunate Island, the Paradise of pleasure, the Garden of God; whose Valleys are like* Eden, *whose Hills are as* Lebanon, *whose Springs are as* Pisgah, *whose Rivers are as* Jordan, *whose Wall is the Ocean, and whose Defence is the* Lord Jehovah.

You are here provided of necessary and comfortable accommodations for your bodies, that a great part of the world are unacquainted with. It is not with the pooreſt

pooreſt among us, as it is ſaid to be with the poor *Ruſſians*, whoſe povery pinches and bites with ſuch ſharp teeth, that their poor cry at the doors, *Give me and cut me, give me and kill me.*

Say not, The barbarous Nations in this excel you; that they poſſeſs the *Mines* of Silver and Gold, which it may be you think enough to ſalve all other inconveniences of life. Alas poor Creatures! better had it been for them, if their Country had brought forth *Bryers* and *Thorns* in ſtead of *Gold*, *Silver*, and *precious ſtones*; for this hath been the occaſion of ruining all their other comforts in this world: this hath invited their cruel avaritious enemies among them, under whoſe ſervitude they groan, and dye without mercy: and thouſands of them have choſen death rather than life, on the terms they enjoyed it. And why might not your lot have fallen there as well as where it is? Are not they made of the ſame clay, and endowed with as good a nature as your ſelves? O what a diſtinction hath Divine Mercy made: where Nature made none! Conſider ungrateful man, thou mighteſt have fallen into ſome of thoſe Regions, where a tainted air frequently cloyes the jaws of death; where the Inhabitants differ very little from the Beaſts in the manner of their living: but God hath provided for thee, and given the pooreſt among us far better accommodations of life, than the greateſt among them are ordinarily provided with. O what hath Providence done for you?

But all that I have ſaid is very inconſiderable, in (2.) compariſon with the *ſpiritual mercies*, and advantages you here enjoy for your ſouls. Oh, this is ſuch an advantageous caſt of Providence for you, as oblidges you to a thankful acknowledgement of it, to all Eternity. For let us here make but a few ſuppoſitions in the caſe before us, and the glory of Providence will ſhine like a Sun-beam full in your faces.

(1.) Suppoſe it had been your Lot to have fallen in any of thoſe vaſt *Continents* poſſeſſed by *Pagans* and *Heathens* at this day, who bow down to the Stock of a

Tree, and worſhip the Hoſt of Heaven. This is the caſe of Millions, and Millions of Millions: for *Pagan Idolaters* (as that ſearching Scholar Mr. *Brierwood* informs us) do not only fill the circumference of nine hundred miles in *Europe*, but almoſt the one half of *Africa*, more than the half of *Aſia*, and almoſt the whole of *America*.

Brierwoods Enquiries, chap. 13. p. 118, 119

Oh how deplorable had thy caſe been, if a *Pagan Idolatreſs* had brought thee forth, and Idolatry had been ſuckt in with thy Mothers milk! then in all probability, thou hadſt been at this day worſhipping *Devils*, and poſting with full ſpeed in the direct road to Damnation: for theſe are the people of Gods wrath, Jer. 10. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.* How dreadful is that imprecation againſt them? *Pſal.* 97. 7. which takes hold of them and all that's theirs, *Confounded be all they that ſerve graven Images, that boaſt themſelves of Idols.*

(2.) Or ſuppoſe your Lot had fallen among *Mahometans*, who next to Pagans ſpread over the greateſt tract of the Earth: for though *Arabia* bred that unclean Bird, yet it was not that Cage, that could long contain him; for, not only the *Arabians*, but the *Perſians*, *Turks* and *Tartars*, do all bow down their backs under that grand Impoſtor. This poiſon hath diſperſed it ſelf through the veins of *Aſia*, over a great part of *Africk*, even the Circumference of ſeven thouſand miles, and ſtops not there, but hath tainted a conſiderable part of *Europe* alſo.

Had your Lot fallen here, O what unhappy men and women had you been, notwithſtanding the natural amenity and pleaſantneſs of your native ſoil? You had then adored a *grand Impoſtor*, and dyed in a fools *Paradiſe*. Inſtead of Gods lively *Oracles*, you had been (as they now are) deceived to your eternal ruine with ſuch fond, mad and wild dreams, as whoſo conſiders would think, the *Authors* had more need of manacles and fetters, than arguments or ſober anſwers.

(3.) Or if neither of theſe had been your Lot, but

you had been emptied by the womb of Nature into this little ſpot of the Earth which is *Chriſtianized* by profeſſion, but nevertheleſs for the moſt part over-run by *Popiſh Idolatry*, and *Antichriſtian* deluſions; what unhappy men and women had you been, had you ſuckt a Popiſh breaſt? For this people are to be the ſubjects of the *Vials* of Gods wrath to be poured out ſucceſſively upon them, as you may read *Rev.* 16. and the Scriptures in round and plain language tell us, what their fate muſt be, 2 Theſſ. 2. 11, 12. *And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſſe.*

Nay, you might have fallen into the ſame *Land* in which your habitation now is, and yet have had no advantage by it as to ſalvation, if he that choſe the bounds of your habitations, had not alſo graciouſly determined the times for you, *Acts* 17. 26. For,

(4.) Suppoſe your Lot had fallen where it is during the *Pagan* State of *England*, who for many hundred years were groſs and vile Idolaters. Thick darkneſs over-ſpread the people of this *Iſland*, and as in other Countreys, the *Devil* was worſhipped, and his lying Oracles zealouſly attended upon.

The ſhaking of the top of *Jupiter*'s Oak in *Dodona*, the Caldron ſmitten with the rod in the hand of *Jupiter*'s Image, the *Lawrel* and *Fountain* in *Daphne*: theſe were the Ordinances on which the poor deluded Wretches waited. So in this Nation they worſhipped Idols alſo: the Sun and Moon were adored for Gods, with many other abominable Idols which our Anceſtors worſhipped, and whoſe memorials are not to this day quite obliterated among us. *Vide Veſtigan's Britiſh Antiquities.*

(5.) Or ſuppoſe our Lot had fallen in thoſe later miſerable dayes, in which *Queen Mary* ſent ſo many hundreds to Heaven in a fiery Chariot, and the poor *Proteſtants* skulked up and down in holes and woods, to preſerve them from *Popiſh Inquiſitors*, who like Blood-hunds, hunted up and down through all the

Cities, Towns and Villages of the Nation, to ſeek out the poor ſheep of Chriſt for a prey.

But ſuch hath the ſpecial care of Providence towards us been, that our turn to be brought upon the ſtage of this World was graciouſly reſerved for better dayes: ſo that if we had had our own option, we could not have choſen for our ſelves, as Providence hath. We are not only furniſhed with the beſt room in this great houſe; but before we were put into it, it was ſwept with thee beeſom of National Reformation, from *Idolatry*, yea, and waſhed by the blood of *Martyrs* from Popiſh filthineſs; and adorned with Goſpel lights, ſhining in as great luſtre in our dayes, as ever they did ſince the *Apoſtles* dayes. You might have been born in *England* for many Ages, and not have found a *Chriſtian* in it: yea, and ſince *Chriſtianity* was here owned, and not have met a *Proteſtant* in it. Oh! what an Obligation hath Providence laid you under, by ſuch a merciful performance as this for you?

Object. If you ſay, *All this indeed is true; but what is this to eternal ſalvation? Do not multitudes that enjoy theſe priviledge, eternally periſh notwithſtanding them? yea, and periſh with an aggravation of ſin and miſery beyond other ſinners?*

Sol. True, they do ſo; and it is of very ſad conſideration that it ſhould be ſo; but yet we cannot deny this to be a very choice and ſingular mercy, to be born in ſuch a Land, and at ſuch a Time. For let us conſider what helps for ſalvation men here enjoy, beyond what they could enjoy, had their Lot fallen according to the fore-mentioned ſuppoſitions.

(1.) Here we enjoy the ordinary means of ſalvation. which elſewhere men are denyed and cut off from. So that if any among the *Heathens* be ſaved and brought to *Chriſt*, it muſt be in ſome miraculous or extraordinary way: for, *How ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14. Alas! were there a deſire awakened in any of their hearts after a Goſpel diſcovery of

of salvation, (which ordinarily is not, nor can be rationally supposed) yet, poor Creatures, they might travel from Sea to Sea, to hear the Word, and not find it: whereas you can hardly miss the opportunities of hearing the Gospel: Sermons meet you frequently, so that you can scarcely shun or avoid the Ordinances and Instruments of your salvation. And is this nothing? Christ even forces himself upon us.

(2.) Here, in this Age of the World, the common prejudices against Christianity are removed, by the advantage it hath of a publick profession among the people, and protection by the Laws of the Countrey. Whereas, were your habitation among *Jews*, *Mahumetans*, or *Heathen Idolaters*, you would find *Christ* and *Christianity* the common *odium* of the Countrey; every one defying and deriding both name and thing; and such your selves likely had been, if your birth and education had been among them. For you may observe, that what ever is *patroparadoton* traditionally delivered down from Father to Son, every one is fond of, and zealous in its defence. The *Jews*, *Heathens* and *Mahometans* are at this day so tenacious of their errors, that with spitting, hissing, and clapping of hands, and all other signs of indignation and abhorrence they chase away all others from among them.

Is it not then a special mercy to you to be cast into such a Countrey aud Age, where (as a learned Divine observes) the true Religion hath the same Advantages over every false one, as in other Countreys they have over it? Here you have the presence of precious Means, and the absence of soul-destroying prejudices, two signal mercies. Mr. *Pinks.*

(3.) Here, in this Age of the World, Christianity bespeaks you assoon as you are capable of any sense, or impressions of Religion upon you, and so by an happy *anticipation*, blocks up the passages, by which a false Religion would else certainly enter. Here you suckin the first notions and principles of Christianity, even with the Mothers milk: and certainly, such a pre-

prepoſſeſſion is a choice advantage. *Quo ſemel e* … *imbuta, recens ſervabit odorem Teſta diu. Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*, Prov. 22. 6.

(4.) Here you have, or may have the help and aſſiſtance of Chriſtians to direct your way, reſolve your doubts, ſupport your burthens, and help you through thoſe difficulties that attend the new birth. Alas! if a poor ſoul had any beginnings or faint workings and ſtirrings after Chriſt and true Religion in many other Countreys, the hand of every man would preſently be againſt him, and none would be found to relieve, aſſiſt or encourage, as you may ſee in that Example of *Galeacius*; the neareſt relations would, in that caſe, prove the greateſt Enemies, the Country would quickly hoot at him as a Monſter, and cry, Away with the *Heretick* to the Priſon or Stake.

Whether theſe eventually prove bleſſings to your ſouls or no, certain I am, that in themſelves they are ſingular mercies, and helps to ſalvation, that are denyed to Millions beſides you. So that if *Plato* when he was near his death, could bleſs God for three things, *viz.* That he was a Man, and not a Beaſt: that he was born in *Greece*; and brought up in the time of *Socrates*: much more cauſe have you to admire Providence, that you are Men, and not Beaſts; that you were born in *England*, and brought up in Goſpel dayes here. This is a Land the Lord hath *Eſpied* for you, as the expreſſion is, Ezek. 20. 6. and concerning it, you have abundant cauſe to ſay, as in another caſe the *Pſalmiſt* doth, Pſal 16. 6. *The lines are fallen to me in pleaſant places, and I have a goodly heritage.*

The Third Performance of Providence.

III.

Providential performances.

The next obſervable Performance of Providence, which muſt be heedfully adverted and weighed, is the

the deſignation of the ſtock and family out of which we ſhould ſpring and riſe. And truly, this is of ſpecial conſideration, both as to our temporal and eternal good: for whether the families in which we grew up, were great or ſmall in *Iſrael*, whether our parents were of the higher or lower *Claſs*, and rank among men; yet if they were ſuch as feared God and wrought righteouſneſs, if they took any care to educate you religiouſly, and trained you up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, you are bound to reckon it among your chief mercies, that you ſprung from the loins of ſuch parents: for from this Spring a double ſtream of mercy riſes to you.

with reſpect to the Stock and Family out of which we ſprang.

(1.) Temporal and external mercies to yout outward man. You cannot but know, that as Godlineſs entails a bleſſing, ſo wickedneſs and unrighteouſneſs a curſe upon poſterity. An inſtance of the former you have in Gen. 17. 18, 20. On the contrary, you have the threatning, Zech. 5. 4. and both together, Prov. 3. 33. *The Curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the wicked, but he Bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt.* True it is, that both theſe imply the Childrens treading in the ſteps of their *Parents*, according to Ezek. 18. but how frequently is it ſeen, that wicked men breed their children vainly and wickedly; ſo that as it's ſaid of *Abijam*, 1 Kings 15. 3. *He walked in all the ſins of his father, which he had done before him*; and ſo the curſe is entail'd from generation to generation To eſcape this Curſe, is a choice Providence.

(2.) But eſpecially take notice, what a ſtream of *ſpiritual bleſſings* and mercies, flows from this Providence to the Inner man. O it's no common mercy, to deſcend from pious Parents: Some of us do not only owe our natural life to them, as Inſtruments of our Beings, but our Spiritual and Eternal life alſo. It was no ſmall mercy to *Timothy*, to be deſcended from ſuch Progenitors, 2 Tim. 1. 5. nor to *Auguſtine*, that he had ſuch a Mother as *Monica*, who planted in his mind the precepts of life with her Words, watered them with her Tears, and nourithed them with her

Exam-

Example. We will a little more particularly inſpect this mercy, and in ſo doing, we ſhall find manifold mercies contained in it.

(1.) What a Mercy was it to us, to have Parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our Infancy, when we could not pray for our ſelves? Thus did *Abraham*, *Gen.* 15. 2. and *Hannah*, 1 *Sam.* 1. 10, 11. and ſome here likely are the fruits and returns of their *Parents* Prayers. This was that holy courſe they continued all their dayes for you, carrying all your concerns, eſpecially your Eternal ones before the Lord with their own; and pouring out their ſouls to God ſo affectionately for you, when their eye-ſtrings and heart-ſtrings were breaking. Oh put a value upon ſuch Mercies; for they are precious. It's a greater Mercy, to deſcend from praying Parents, than from the loyns of Nobles. See *Job's* pious practice, *Job* 1. 5.

(2.) What a ſpecial Mercy was it to us, to have the excreſcencies of corruption nipt in the bud by their pious and careful diſcipline? We now underſtand what a critical and dangerous ſeaſon Youth is, the wonderful proclivity of that Age to every thing that is evil. Why elſe are they called Youthful luſts? 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. When *David* asketh, *Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way*? it's plainly enough implyed in the very Queſtion, that the way he takes lieth through the pollutions of the world in his youth, *Pſal.* 119. 9. When you find a *David* praying, that God would *not remember the ſins of his youth*, Pſal. 25. 7. and a *Job* bitterly complaining, that God *made him to poſſeſs the ſins of his youth*, Job 13. 26. Sure, you cannot but reflect; with a very thankful heart, upon thoſe happy means, by which the corruption of your nature was happily prevented, or reſtrained in your Youth.

(3.) And how great a Mercy was it, that we had Parents, who carefully inſtilled the good knowledge of God into our ſouls in our tender years? How careful was *Abraham* of this duty? *Gen.* 18. 19. and *David*;

vid? 1 *Chron.* 28. 9. We have ſome of us had Parents, who might ſay to us, as the *Apoſtle*, Gal. 4. 19. *My little Children, of whom I travail again in birth till Chriſt be formed in you.* As they longed for us before they had us, and rejoyced in us when they had us; ſo they could not endure to think, that when they could have us no more, the Devil ſhould. As they thought no pains, care or coſt too much for our bodies to feed them, cloath and heal them; ſo did they think no prayers, counſels or tears, too much for our ſouls, that they might be ſaved. They knew a parting time would come betwixt them and us, and did ſtrive to make it as eaſie and comfortable to them as they could, by leaving us in *Chriſt*, and within the bleſſed bond of his Covenant.

They were not glad, that we had Health, and indifferent whether we had Grace.

They as ſenſibly felt the miſeries of our ſouls as of our bodies; and nothing was more deſirable to them, than that they might ſay in the great day, Lord, here am I, and the Children which thou haſt given me.

(4.) And was it not a ſpecial Favour to us, to have *Parents* that went before us as Paterns of Holineſs, and beat the path to Heaven for us by their Examples? Who could ſay to us, as Phil. 4. 9. *What things ye have heard and ſeen in me, that do*; and as 1 Cor. 11. 1. *Be ye followers of us; as we are of Chriſt.* The *Parents* life is the *Childs* copy. O 't is no common mercy, to have a fair copy ſet before us, eſpecially in the moulding age: we ſaw what they did, as well as heard what they ſaid. It was *Abraham's* commendation, that he commanded his Children, and his houſhold *after him*, to keep the way of the Lord. And ſuch mercies ſome of us have had alſo.

Ah my friends, let me beg you, that you will ſet ſpecial remarques upon this Providence, which ſo graciouſly wrought for you: and that your hearts may be more throughly warmed in the ſenſe of it, compare your condition with others, and ſeriouſly bethink your ſelves. (1.) How

(1.) How many Children there be among us, that are drawn headlong to Hell by their cruel and ungodly Parents, who teach them to curse and swear assoon as they can speak? Many families there are, wherein little other language is heard, but what is the Dialect of Hell. These, like the old logs and small spray, are preparing for the fire of Hell, where they must burn together. Of such Children, that Scripture, *Psal.* 49. 19. will one day be verified, except they repent, *They shall go to the generation of their fathers, where they shall not see light.*

(2.) And how many families are there, though not so prophane, who yet breed up their Children vainly and sensually, as *Job* 21. 11, *&c.* take no care what becomes of their souls, so they can but provide for their bodies? If they can but teach them to carry their bodies, no matter if the Devil act their souls: If they can but leave them Lands or Moneys, they think they have very fully discharged their duties. O what will the language be, wherewith such Parents and Children shall greet each other at the Judgement Seat, and in Hell for ever?

(3.) And how many be there, who are more *sober*, and yet hate the least appearances of Godliness in their *Children*, who instead of cherishing, do all that they can to break bruised reeds, and quench smoaking flax, to stifle and strangle the first appearances, and offers they make towards Christ? Who had rather accompany them to their *graves*, than to *Christ*, doing all that in them lyes, *Herod* like, to kill *Christ* in the *Cradle*? Ah Sirs, ye little know, what a mercy ye do or have enjoyed in Godly Parents, and what a good Lot Providence cast for you in this Concernment of your bodies and souls.

Object. If any shall say, *This was not their case, they had little help Heaven-ward from their Parents*: To such I shall only reply three things.

Sol. (1.) If you had little furtherance, yet own it as a special Providence, that you had no hinderance; or, if you had opposition, yet

(2.) Ad-

(2.) Admire the Grace of God, in plucking you out by a wonderful diſtinguiſhing hand of mercy from among them, and keeping alive the languiſhing ſparks of Grace amidſt the floods of oppoſition.

(3.) And learn from hence, if God give you a poſterity of your own, to be ſo much the more ſtrict and careful of relational duties, by how much you have ſenſibly felt the want of it in your ſelves.

But ſeeing ſuch a train of bleſſings, both as to this life, and that to come, follow upon an holy education of Children; I will not diſmiſs the Point, till I have diſcharged my duty, in exhorting Parents and Children to their duties.

And firſt for you that are *Parents*, or to whom the Education of Children is committed, I beſeech you mind, how concerning a duty lies on you: and that I may effectually preſs it, conſider, (1.)

(1.) How near the Relation is betwixt you and your Children, and therefore how much you are concerned in their happineſs or miſery. Conſider but the Scripture account of the dearneſs of ſuch Relations, expreſſed (1.) By longings for them, as *Gen.* 15. 2. *Gen.* 30. 1. and (2.) By our joy when we have them, as Chriſt expreſſes it, *John* 16. 21. (3.) The high value ſet on them, *Gen.* 42. 38. (4.) The ſympathie with them in all their troubles, *Mark.* 9. 22. and (5.) By our ſorrow at parting, *Gen.* 37. 35. Now ſhall all this be to no purpoſe? For to what purpoſe do we deſire them before we have them, rejoice in them when we have them, value them ſo highly, ſympathize with them ſo tenderly, grieve for their death ſo exceſſively; if in the mean time no care be taken what ſhall become of them to Eternity?

(2.) How God hath charged you with their ſouls, as well as bodies: and this appears by two ſorts of Precepts. (1.) Precepts directly laid upon you, *Deut.* 6. 6, 7. and *Eph.* 6. 4. (2.) By Precepts laid on them to obey you, *Eph.* 6. 1. which plainly implies your duty, as well as expreſſes theirs.

(3.) What ſhall comfort you at the parting time, if

if they dye through your neglect in a Christless condition? Oh this is the cutting consideration? My *Child* is in *Hell*, and I did nothing to prevent it; I helped him thither. Duty discharged, is the only root of comfort in that day.

(4.) If you neglect to instruct them in the way of *Holiness*, will the Devil neglect to instruct them in the way of *Wickedness*? No, no, if you will not teach them to *pray*, he will to *curse*, *swear* and *lye*. If ground be uncultivated, weeds will spring.

(5.) If the season of their youth be neglected, how little probability is there of any good fruit afterwards? that is the Moulding age, *Prov.* 22. 6. How few are converted in old age? A twig is brought to any form, but grown limbs will not bow.

(6.) You are instrumental causes of all their spiritual misery; and that (1.) By *generation*. (2.) *Imitation*, they lye spiritually dead of the Plague which you brought home among them, Psal. 51. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my Mother conceive* (or warm) *me*.

(7.) There's none in the World so likely as you, to be Instruments of their Eternal good. You have peculiar advantages that none other hath; as (1.) The interest you have in their affections. (2.) Your opportunities to instil the knowledge of Christ into them, being daily with them, *Deut.* 6. 7. (3.) Your knowledge of their tempers: if therefore you neglect, who shall help them?

(8.) The consideration of the great day, should move your bowels of pity for them. O remember that Text, Rev. 20. 12, &c. *I saw the dead small and great stand before God.* What a sad thing will it be, to see your dear Children at Christs left hand? O friends, do your utmost to prevent this misery. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perswade men.*

(2.) And you *Children*, especially you that sprang from religious *Parents*, I beseech you, obey their Counsels; and tread in the steps of their pious Examples. To press this, I offer these Considerations.

(1.) Your

(1.) Your diſobedience to them, is a reſiſting of Gods Authority, Epheſ. 6. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord*: there's the Command: your rebellion therefore runs higher than you think. It is not Man, but God that you diſobey; and for your diſobedience God will puniſh you. It may be, their tenderneſs will not ſuffer them, or you are grown beyond their correction: all they can do, is to complain to God; and if ſo, he will handle you more ſeverely than they could do.

(2.) Your Sin is greater than the Sin of young *Heathens* and *Infidels*; and ſo will your Account be alſo. O better (if a wicked Child) that thou hadſt been the off-ſpring of Salvage *Indians*, nay, of Beaſts, than of ſuch Parents. So many Counſels diſobeyed, Hopes and Prayers fruſtrated, will turn to ſad aggravations.

(3.) It's uſual with God, to retaliate mens diſobedience to their Parents in kind: Commonly our own Children ſhall pay us home for it. I have read in a grave *Author*, of a wicked Wretch that drag'd his Father along the houſe: the Father begg'd him, not to draw him beyond ſuch a place: for, ſaid he, I drag'd my Father no farther. O the ſad, but juſt retributions of God!

And for you, in whoſe hearts Grace hath been planted by the bleſſing of Education, I beſeech you to admire Gods goodneſs to you in this *Providence*. Oh what an happy Lot hath God caſt for you! How few Children are partakers of your mercies?

See that you honour ſuch Parents; the tie is double upon you ſo to do. Be you the joy of their hearts, and comfort of their lives, if living: if not, yet ſtill remember the mercy while *you* live, and tread in their pious path; that you and they may both rejoice together in the great day, and bleſs God for each other to all Eternity.

The Fourth Performance of Providence.

IV.

Providential performances about our Conversion to God.

THe next remarkable performance of Providence for the People of God in which I will instance, shall be with respect to its ordering the Occasions, Instruments and Means of their Conversion.

In nothing doth Providence shine forth more gloriously in this world, than it doth in this performance for the people of God How curiously soever its hand had moulded your bodies, how tenderly soever it had preserved them, and how bountifully soever it had provided for them; if it had not also ordered some means or other for your Conversion, all the former favours and benefits it had done for you, had signified little. This, O this is the most excellent benefit you ever received from its hand. You are more beholden to it for this, than for all your other mercies. And in opening this performance of Providence, I cannot but think your hearts must be deeply affected. This is a subject which every gracious heart loves to steep its thoughts in. It's certainly the sweetest History that ever they repeated: they love to think and talk of it The Places where, and Instruments by whom this work was wrought, are exceedingly endeared to them for the works sake: yea, endeared to that degree; that for many years after their hearts have melted, when they have but passed occasionally by those places, or but seen the faces of those persons, that were used as Instruments in the hand of Providence for their good. As no doubt, but * *Jacob's Beth-el* was ever after that night sweet to his thoughts: so other Saints have had their *Bethels* as well as he. O blessed Places, Times and Instruments! O the deep, the sweet impressions, never to be razed out of the memory or heart, that this Providence hath made upon those on whom it wrought this blessed Effect at years of discretion, and in a more sensible way!

* Gen. 48. 3.

But

But leſt any poor ſoul ſhould be diſcouraged under the diſplay of this Providence, becauſe he cannot remember the Time, Place, Inſtruments and Manner wherein, and by which Converſion-work was wrought; I will therefore premiſe this neceſſary diſtinction, to prevent injury to ſome, whilſt I deſign benefit to others.

Converſion, as to the ſubjects of it, may be conſidered two wayes; either as it is more ſenſibly wrought in perſons of riper years, who in their youthful daies were more prophane and vile; or upon perſons in their tender years, into whoſe hearts Grace was more inſenſibly, and undiſcernably inſtilled by Gods bleſſing upon pious Education. In the former ſort, the diſtinct acts of the Spirit, as *illuminating*, *convincing*, *humbling*, *drawing* them to *Chriſt*, and *ſealing* them are more evident and diſcernable: in the latter, more obſcure and confuſed; they can remember, that God gave them an Eſteem and liking of godly perſons, Care of duty, and Conſcience of ſin; but as to the Time, Place, Inſtruments and Manner of the work, they can give but a ſlender account of them: however, if the work be ſavingly wrought in them, there is no reaſon they ſhould be troubled, becauſe the Circumſtances of it are not ſo evident to them, as they are to others. Let the ſubſtance and reality of the work appear, and there is no reaſon to afflict your ſelves, becauſe of the unevidence of ſuch Circumſtances.

But yet where the Circumſtances as well as Subſtance are clear to a man, when we can call to remembrance, the Time when, the Place where, the Inſtrument by whom that work was wrought, it muſt needs be exceeding ſweet: and they cannot but yield a freſh delight to the ſoul every time they are reflected upon.

There are many of the following occaſions, which may be, we took for *ſtraglers* when they firſt befell us: but they proved *ſcouts* ſent out from the main body of Providence, which they make way for.

Now there be divers things in thoſe Providences, that are verſant about this work, which are exceeding ſweet, and taking; as namely. 1. The

(1.) The wonderful ſtrangeneſs and unaccountableneſs of this work of Providence, in caſting us into the way, and ordering the occaſions, yea, the minuteſt Circumſtances about this work. Thus you find in *Acts* 8. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, &c. the *Eunuch* at that very inſtant when he was reading the Prophet *Eſay*, hath an Interpreter, one among a thouſand, that joins his *Chariot*, juſt as his mind was by a fit occaſion prepared to receive the firſt light of the knowledge of *Chriſt*.

And how ſtrange was that Change (how far ſoever it went) upon *Naaman* the *Syrian*? recorded 2 *Kings* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. That the *Syrians* in their incurſion ſhould bring away this girl, (likely her beauty was the inducement,) and ſhe muſt be preſented to *Naaman's* Wife, and relate to her the power of God that accompanied the *Prophet*; though you find in that particular caſe there had never been an inſtance given before, *Luke* 4. 27. Doubtleſs, the whole of this affair was guided by the ſignal direction of Providence.

So for the Converſion of the *Samaritans*, it's obſerved *John* 4. 4. Chriſt muſt needs go that way, (*i. e.*) it lay juſt in the road betwixt *Judea* and *Galilee*, and at the ſixth hour (*i. e.*) high noon, he reſts himſelf upon *Jacob's* Well, ſtill ſeeming to have no other deſign, but his own refreſhment, by ſitting and drinking there: but O what a train of bleſſed Providences follow this, which ſeemed but an accidental thing! firſt the Woman of *Samaria*, and then many more in that City are brought to believe in *Chriſt*, as you find *Verſe* 29. and 41.

Melch. Adams Vita Theol. par. 2. p. 194. It is noted by *Melchior Adams* in the Life of *Junius*, how very an *Atheiſt* he was grown in his younger years; but in order to his Converſion to God, firſt, a wonderful preſervation of his life in a publick tumult at *Lyons* in *France* muſt make way, which forces from him the acknowlegement of a Deity. Then his Father ſends for him home, and with much gentleneſs perſwades him to read the Scriptures; he lights upon the *firſt* of *John*, and with it he ſenſibly feels a Divine Supernatural Majeſty and Power ſeizing his ſoul, which

which brought him over by a compleat Converſion to *Jeſus Chriſt*. Thus, as the Woman of *Tekoa* told *David*, *doth God deviſe means to bring back his baniſhed.*

Lavater tells us, that many *Spaniſh* Souldiers, going into the Wars of *Germany*, were there converted to *Chriſt*, by falling into the *Cities* and *Towns*, where godly *Miniſters* and Chriſtians were.

Mr. *Robert Bolton*, though an excellent Scholar, yet in his younger years he was a very irreligious perſon, and a jeerer of holy men; but being caſt into the company of godly Mr. *Peacock*, was by him brought to repentance, and proved a famous Inſtrument in the Church of Chriſt.

A ſcrap of paper accidentally coming to view, hath been uſed as an occaſion of Converſion. This was the caſe of a Miniſter of *Wales*, who had two Livings, but took little care of either. He being at a *Fair*, bought ſomething at a *Pedlers* Standing; and rent off a leaf of Mr. *Perkin*'s Catechiſm to wrapt it in, and reading a line or two in it, God ſet it home, ſo as it did the work. *See Firmin's Real Chriſtian, p. 119.*

The Marriage of a Godly Man into a Carnal Family, hath been ordered by Providence, for the Converſion and Salvation of many therein. Thus we read, in the Life of that renowned *Engliſh* Worthy Mr. *John Bruen*, that in his ſecond Match it was agreed, that he ſhould have one years diet in his Mother-in-laws houſe: During his abode there that year (ſaith Mr. *Clark*) the Lord was pleaſed by his means, graciouſly to work upon her Soul, as alſo upon his Wifes Siſter, and half Siſter, their Brothers Mr. *William* and *Thomas Fox*, with one or two of the ſervants in that Family.

The reading of a good Book, hath been the means of bringing others to Chriſt. And thus we find many of the *German* Divines converted, by reading *Luther*'s Books: yea, and what is more ſtrange, Mr. *Sleyden* in his Commentary tells us, that *Vergerius*, though he were preſent an eye and ear-witneſs to that doleful caſe of *Spira*, which one would think ſhould move a ſtone, yet ſtill continued ſo firm to the *Popes* Intereſt, *Sleyden's Comment. p. 475.*

that when he fell into ſome ſuſpicion among the *Cardinals*, he reſolved to purge himſelf, by writing a Book againſt the *German Apoſtates*: but whilſt he read the *Proteſtant* Books, out of no other deſign, but to confute them; whilſt he is weighing the Arguments, is himſelf convinced and brought to *Chriſt*. He finding himſelf thus overcome by the truth, imparts his conviction to his *Brother*, a zealous *Papiſt* alſo: this *Brother* deplores the miſery of his caſe, and ſeeks to reclaim him; but *Vergerius* entreating him to weigh well the *Proteſtant* Arguments, he alſo yields; and ſo both immediately betook themſelves to preach Juſtification by the free grace of God through the blood of Chriſt.

Poſſidonius in vita Auguſtini. cap. 15.

Yea, not only the reading of a Book, or hearing a Miniſter, but (which is moſt remarkable) the very miſtake or forgetfulneſs of a Miniſter, hath been improv'd by *Providence* for this end and purpoſe. *Auguſtine* once preaching to his Congregation, forgot the Argument which firſt he propos'd, and fell upon the Error of the *Manichees* beſide his firſt intention: by which diſcourſe, he converted one *Firmus* his *Auditor*; who fell down at his feet weeping, and confeſſing he had lived a *Manichee* many years. Another I knew who going to preach, took up another *Bible* than that he deſign'd, in which, not only miſſing his *Notes*, but the *Chapter* alſo in which his *Text* lay, was put to ſome loſs thereby: but after a ſhort pauſe, he reſolv'd to ſpeak to any other Scripture that might be preſented to him, and accordingly read that Text - 2 Pet. 3. 9. *The Lord is not ſlack concerning his Promiſe*, &c. And though he had nothing prepar'd; yet the Lord help him to ſpeak both methodically and pertinently from it: by which diſcourſe, a gracious change was wrought upon one in the Congregation, who hath ſince given good Evidence of a ſound Converſion, and acknowledged this Sermon to be the firſt and only Mean thereof.

The accompanying of others in a Neighbourly civil Viſit, hath been over-rul'd to the ſame end. That man

many of the *Jews* accompanied *Mary* in *Bethany*, (deſigning only to manifeſt their civil reſpect) but there they met Chriſt, ſaw the things which he did, and believed on him, John. 11. 45.

Mr. *Firmin* in his *Real Chriſtian*, *pag.* 97, 98. tells us of one, who had liv'd many years in a *Town* where *Chriſt* had been as clearly, and as long preached, as in any *Town* in *England*. This man when he was about ſeventy ſix years of age, went to viſit a ſick Neighbour. „ A Chriſtian friend of mine (ſaith mine Author) „ came to ſee him alſo, and finding this old man „ there; whom he judged to be one that lived upon „ his own ſtock: Civility, good Works, *&c.* he „ purpoſely fell into that diſcourſe, to ſhew how many „ perſons lived upon their duties, but never came to „ *Chriſt*. The old man ſitting by the bed ſide, heard „ him; and God was pleaſed to convince him, that „ he was ſuch a perſon, who had lived upon himſelf „ without Chriſt to that day; and would ſay after- „ wards, had I dyed before threeſcore and ſixteen, I „ had periſht, for I knew not Chriſt.

The committing of a godly man to *Priſon*, hath been the method of Providence, to ſave the ſoul of a poor Keeper. So *Paul*, *Acts* 16. 26. was made a *Priſoner*, to make his Keeper a ſpiritual *Free-man*. The like ſucceſs had Dr. *Barnes* in Queen *Mary's* dayes, who afterwards celebrated the *Lord Supper* in Priſon with his converted Keeper.

The ſcattering of *Miniſters* and *Chriſtians* by Perſecution from *Cities* and *Towns*, into the ignorant and barbarous parts of the Countrey, hath been the way of Providence, to find out, and bring home ſome loſt ſheep that were found there, to Jeſus Chriſt, *Acts* 8. 1, 4. The like ſignal Event hath ſince followed upon the like ſcattering of godly *Miniſters*, whereof are many pregnant Inſtances at this day.

A *Servant* running away from his Maſter, (likely upon no other deſign but to live an idle life) yet falling into ſuch places and companies, as Providence ordered (in a deſign to him unknown) hath thereby

been brought to be the ſervant of *Chriſt*. This was the very caſe of *Oneſimus*, who run away from his Maſter *Philemon*, to *Rome*; where by a ſtrange Providence (poſſibly a meer curioſity to ſee the Priſoners) he there falls into *Paul*'s hands. who begat him to Chriſt in his bonds, *Philemon*, *Ver.* 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Going to hear a Sermon in jeſt, hath proved ſome mens Converſion in earneſt. The above named Mr. *Firmin* in the force-cited Book, tells us of a notorious *drunkard*, whom the drunkards called *Father*, that one day, would needs go to hear what *Wilſon*, ſaid, out of no other deſign it ſeems, but to ſcoff at that holy man: but in the prayer before Sermon, hts heart began to thaw; and when he read his Text, which was John. 5. 14. *Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee*: he could not contain; and in that Sermon the Lord changed his heart, though ſo bitter an Enemy, that the Miniſter on Lecture-dayes was afraid to go to Church before his ſhop door. *Lo, theſe are parts of his wayes, but how ſmall a portion is known of him*?

The dropping of ſome grave and weighty word accidentally in the preſence of vain carnal perſons, the death of an Husband, Wife or Child, a fit of ſickneſs, with a thouſand other ſuch like occaſions, have been thus improved by Providence to the Converſion of ſouls.

And no leſs remarkable and wonderful are the deſigns of Providence in ordering the *removes*, and governing the *motions* of Miniſters, from place to place in order unto the Converſion of ſouls. Thus oftentimes it carries them to places where they intended not to go; God having (unknown to them) ſome Elect Veſſels there, who muſt be Called by the Goſpel.

Thus *Paul* and *Timothy* (a ſweet and lovely pair) when they were travelling through *Phrygia* and *Galatia*. were forbid to preach the Word in *Aſia*, to which probably their minds inclined. *Acts.* 16. 6. and when they eſſayed to go into *Bythinia*, the Spirit ſuffered them not, *Ver.* 7. But a Man of *Macedonia* (*i. e.* an

Angel

Angel in the ſhape or habit of a man of that *Countrey*) appeared to *Paul* in a Viſion, and prayed him, ſaying, *Come over into* Macedonia, *and help us*, Ver 9. and there did God open the heart of *Lydia*.

I knew a pious *Miniſter* now with God, who falling in his Study upon a very rouzing ſubject, intended for his own Congregation, was ſtrongly moved, when he had finiſhed it, to go to a rude, vile, prophane people, about five miles off, and firſt preach it to them; after many wreſtlings with himſelf, not being willing to quench any motion that might be ſuppoſed to come from the Spirit of God, he obeyed, and went to this people, who had then no Miniſter of their own, and few durſt come among them. And there did the Lord, beyond all expectation, open a door, and ſeveral prophane ones received *Chriſt* in that place, and engadged this *Miniſter* to a Weekly Lecture among them, in which many ſouls were won to God.

The ſame holy Man, at another time; being upon a Journey, paſſed by a company of vain perſons, who were wreſtling upon a *Green* near the road: and juſt as he came againſt the place, one of them had thrown his *Antagoniſt*, and ſtood triumphing in his ſtrength and activity. This good man rode up to them, and turning his ſpeech to this perſon; told him, Friend. I ſee you are a ſtrong man; but yet let not the ſtrong man glory in his ſtrength: You muſt known, that you are not to wreſtle with fleſh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and ſpiritual wickedneſſes: how ſad will it be, that *Satan* ſhould at laſt trip up the heels of your hope, and give you an eternal overthrow? And after about a quarter of an hours ſerious diſcourſe upon this ſubject, he left them, and went on his Journey; but this diſcourſe made ſuch an impreſſion, that the perſon had no reſt, till he opened his trouble to a godly Miniſter, who wiſely following the work upon his ſoul, ſaw at laſt the bleſſed iſſue thereof in the gracious change of the perſon, whereof he afterwards gave the *Miniſter* a

joyful account. O how unsearchable are the Methods of Providence in this matter?

Nay, what is yet more wonderful, the Providence of God hath sometimes ordered the very malice of *Satan*, and wickedness of men, as an occasion of Eternal good to their souls. A very memorable Example whereof, I shall here give the Reader, faithfully relating what not many years past fell out in my own observation in this place, to the astonishment of many spectators.

In the year 1673. there came into this *Port* a Ship of *Poole*, in her return from *Virginia*; in which Ship was one of that place, a lusty young man of twenty three years of age, who was *Chirurgeon* in the Ship. This person in the voyage fell into a deep melancholy, which the *Devil* greatly improved to serve his own design for the ruine of this poor man; however, it pleased the Lord to restrain him from any attempts upon his own life, until he arrived here. But shortly after his arrival, upon the Lords Day early in the morning (being in bed with his Brother) he took a knife prepared for that purpose, and cut his own throat, and withal leapt out of the bed, and though the wound was deep and large, yet thinking it might not soon enough dispatch his wretched life, desperately thrust it into his stomach, and so lay wallowing in his own blood, till his *Brother* awaking, made a cry for help: hereupon a *Physician* and a *Chirurgeon* coming in, found the wound in his Throat mortal; and all they could do at present, was only to stitch it and apply a plaister, with design, rather to enable him to speak for a little while, than with any expectation of cure; for before that, he breathed through the wound, and his voice was inarticulate.

In this condition I found him that morning, and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of Eternity, I laboured to work upon his heart the sense of his condition, telling him, I had but little time to do any thing for him, and therefore desired him to let me know, what his own apprehensions of his present Con-

Condition were: He told me, he hoped in God for Eternal Life; I replyed, that I feared his hopes were ungrounded, for that the Scripture tells us, *No Murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*, but this was ſelf-murther, the groſſeſt of all Murthers: and inſiſting upon the aggravation and heinouſneſs of the fact, I perceived his vain confidence began to fall, and ſome meltings of heart appeared in him. He then began to lament with many tears his ſin and miſery, and asked me, if there might yet be hope for one that had deſtroyed himſelf, and ſhed his own blood. I replyed, the ſin indeed is great, but not unpardonable; and if the Lord gave him repentance unto life, and faith to apply *Jeſus Chriſt*, it ſhould be certainly pardoned to him: and finding him unacquainted with theſe things, I opened to him the nature and neceſſity of faith and repentance, which he greedily ſuckt in, and with great vehemency cryed to God, that he would work them upon his ſoul, and intreated me alſo to pray with him and for him, that it might be ſo. I prayed with him, and the Lord thawed his heart exceedingly in that duty: loth he was to part with me; but the duties of the day neceſſitating me to leave him, I briefly ſummed up what was moſt neceſſary in my parting counſel to him, and took my leave, never expecting to ſee him more in this world. But beyond my own and all mens expectation, he continued all that day, and panted moſt ardently after *Jeſus Chriſt*: no diſcourſes pleaſed him, but *Chriſt* and faith; and in this frame I found him in the evening. He rejoiced greatly to ſee me again, and entreated me to continue my diſcourſes upon theſe ſubjects; and after all told me, Sir, the Lord hath given me repentance for this ſin; yea, and for every other ſin. I ſee the Evil of ſin now, ſo as I never ſaw it before. O I loath my ſelf: I am a vile creature in my own eyes, I do alſo believe; *Lord help my unbelief.* I am heartily willing to take Chriſt upon his own terms. One thing only troubles me, I doubt this bloody ſin will not be pardoned. Will Jeſus Chriſt (ſaid he) apply his blood to me, that

have

have ſhed my own blood? I told him, Chriſt ſhed his blood even for them that with wicked hands had ſhed the blood of Chriſt; and that was a ſin of deeper guilt than his. Well, (ſaid he) I will caſt my ſelf upon Chriſt; let him do by me what he will. And ſo I parted with him that night.

Next morning the wounds were to be opened; and then, the opinion of the *Chirurgeons* was, he would immediately expire.

Accordingly, at his deſire, I came that morning and found him in a moſt ſerious frame. I prayed with him, and then the wound in his ſtomach was opened, but by this time the *Ventricle* it ſelf was ſwoln out of the *orifice* of the wound, and lay like a livid diſcoloured *Tripe* upon his body, and was alſo cut through; ſo that all concluded, it was impoſſible for him to live; however they ſtitcht the wound in the ſtomach, enlarged the Orifice, and fomented it, and wrought it again into his body, and ſo ſtitching up the skin, left him to the diſpoſe of Providence.

But ſo it was, that both the deep wound in his throat, and this in his ſtomach healed: and the more dangerous wound *ſin* had made upon his *ſoul*, was, I truſt, effectually healed alſo. I ſpent many hours with him in that ſickneſs; and after his return home, received this account from Mr. *Samuel Hardy*, a Miniſter in that Town. Part whereof I ſhall tranſcribe.

Dear Sir,

I Was much troubled at the ſad Providence in your Town; but did much rejoice, that he fell into ſuch hands for his body and ſoul. You have taken much pains with him, and I hope to good purpoſe. I think, if ever a great and through work were done ſuch a way, *it is now; and if never the like, I am perſwaded now it is. Never grow weary of ſuch good works. One ſuch Inſtance is* (methinks) *enough to make you to abound in the work of the Lord all your dayes*, &c.

O how

O how unſearchable are the wayes of Providence, in leading men to Chriſt! Let none be encouraged by this to ſin, that grace may abound. Theſe are rare and ſingular Inſtances of the mercy of God, and ſuch as no preſumptuous ſinner can expect to find. It's only recited here, to the honour of Providence, which works for the recovery of ſinners in wayes that we underſtand not. O what a fetch hath Providence beyond our Underſtandings!

And as it orders very ſtrange occaſions to awaken and rouſe ſouls at firſt; ſo it works no leſs wonderfully in carrying on the work to perfection; and this it doth two wayes. (2.)

(1.) By quickning and reviving dying convictions and troubles for ſin. Souls after their firſt awakening, are apt to loſe the ſenſe and impreſſion of their firſt troubles for ſin; but Providence is vigilant to prevent it; and doth effectually prevent it ſometimes by *directing the Miniſter* to ſome diſcourſe or paſſage, that ſhall fall as pat, as if the caſe of ſuch a perſon had been ſtudied by him, and deſignedly ſpoken to. How often have I found this in the caſes of many ſouls, who have profeſſed they have ſtood amazed, to hear the very thoughts of their hearts diſcovered by the Preacher, who knew nothing of them! Sometimes by directing them to ſome proper rouſing Scripture, that ſuites their preſent caſe. And ſometimes by ſuffering them to fall into ſome new ſin, which ſhall awaken all their former troubles again, and put a new efficacy and activity into the Conſcience. The world is full of Inſtances in all theſe caſes, and becauſe moſt Chriſtians have experience of theſe things in themſelves, it will be needleſs to recite them here. Search but a few years back, and you may remember, that according to this Account (at leaſt, in ſome particulars) Providence ordered the matter with you. Have you not found ſome rod or other prepared by Providence, to rouze you out of your ſecurity? Why this is ſo common a thing with Chriſtians, that they many times preſage an affliction

coming from the frames they find their own hearts in.

(2.) It gives also great assistance to the work of the Spirit upon the soul. by ordering, supporting, relieving and cheering means, to prop up and comfort the soul, when it is over-burthened, and ready to sink in the deeps of troubles. I remember Mr. *Bolton* gives us one Instance which fits both these cases, the *reviving of convictions*, and *seasonable supports in the deeps of troubles.* And it is of a person that by convictions had been fetcht off from his wicked companions, and entered into a reformed course of life; but after this, through the inticement of his old companions, the subtility of Satan, and corruption of his own heart, did again relapse into the wayes of sin. Then was Providentially brought to his view that Scripture, *Prov.* 1. 24, 25, 26, *&c.* this renewed his trouble; yea, aggravated it to a greater height than ever: insomuch that he could scarcely think (as it seems by the relation) his sin could be pardoned. But in this plunge, that Text *Luke* 17. 4. was presented to him, which sweetly setled him in a sure and glorious peace.

Nor can we here forget that miraculous work of Providence, in a time of great extremity, which was wrought for that good *Gentlewoman* Mrs. *Honeywood*, (and is somewhere mentioned by the same Author) who under a deep and sad desertion, refused and put off all comfort, seeming to despair utterly of the grace and mercy of God. A worthy Minister being one day with her, and reasoning against her desperate conclusions, she took a *Venice-glass* from the Table, and said, Sir, I am as sure to be damned, as this glass is to be broken; and therewith threw it forcibly to the ground; but to the astonishment of both, the glass remained whole and sound, which the Minister taking up with admiration, rebuked her presumption, and sheweth her what a wonder Providence had wrought for her satisfaction, and it greatly altered the temper of her mind. O how unsearchable are his wayes! and his paths

paths paſt finding out! Lo, theſe are part of his wayes; but how ſmall a portion do we know of him?

AND now ſuffer me to expoſtulate a little with thy ſoul Reader, haſt thou been duly ſenſible of thy obligation to Providence, for this ineſtimable favour? O what hath it done for thee! there are divers kinds of mercies conveyed to men by the hand of Providence, but none like this: in all the Treaſury of its benefits, none is found like this. Did it caſt thee into the way of Converſion, and order the means and occaſions of it for thee, when thou little thoughteſt of any ſuch thing? How dear and ſweet, ſhould the remembrance of it be to thy ſoul! Methinks it ſhould aſtoniſh and melt you every time you reflect upon it. Such Mercies ſhould never grow ſtale, or look like common things to you: for do but ſeriouſly conſider the following particulars.

How *ſurprizing* the mercy was, which it performed for you in that day. (1.) Providence had a deſign upon you, for your eternal good, which you underſtood not. The time of mercy was now fully come; the Decree was now ready to bring forth that mercy, with which it had gone big from Eternity, and its gracious deſign muſt be executed by the hand of Providence, ſo far as concerned the external means and inſtruments: and how aptly did it cauſe all things to fall in with that deſign, though you knew not the meaning of it? Look over all the before mentioned Examples, and you ſhall ſee the bleſſed work of Converſion begun upon thoſe ſouls, when they minded it no more, than *Saul* did a Kingdom, that morning he went out to ſeek his *Fathers Aſſes*, 1 *Sam.* 9. 3, 20. Providence might truly have ſaid to you in that day, as Chriſt ſaid to *Peter*, John 13. 7. *What I do thou knoweſt not now, but hereafter thou ſhalt know it. Gods thoughts are not as our thonghts; but as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, ſo are his thoughts higher than ours, and his wayes than our wayes.* Little did *Zacheus* think, when

when he climbed up into the *Sycamore*-tree, to see *Christ* as he passed that way, what a design of mercy *Christ* had upon him, who took thence the occasion of becoming both his *Guest* and *Saviour*, Luk. 19. 5,6,7,8. And as little did some of you think, what the aim of Providence was, when you went (some out of custom, others out of curiosity, if not worse ends) to hear such a Sermon. O how stupendious are the wayes of God!

(2.) What a distinguishing and seasonable mercy was usher'd in by Providence in that day. It brought you to the means of salvation in a good hour. At that very nick of time, when the *Angel* troubled the Waters, you were brought to the *Pool*; to allude to that, *John* 5.4. Now the accepted day was come, the *Spirit* was in the Ordinance, or Providence that converted you, and you were set in the way of it. It may be, you had heard many hundred Sermons before, but nothing would stick till now, because the hour was not come. The Lord did, as it were, call in the Word for such a man, such a woman; and Providence said, Lord, here he is, I have brought him before thee. There were many others under that Sermon, that received no such mercy. You your selves had heard many before, but not to that advantage, as it is said, Luke 4. 27. *There were many Lepers in Israel in the dayes of Elizeus, but to none of them was the Prophet sent, save unto Naaman the Syrian.* So there were many poor unconverted souls beside you under the Word that day, and it may be, to none of them was salvation sent that day, but to you. O blessed Providence, that set you in the way of mercy at that time!

What a weighty and important mercy was Providentially directed to your souls that day. There are mercies of al sizes and kinds in the hands of Providence to dispense to the sons of men: its left hand is full of blessings, as well as its right. It hath health and riches, honours and pleasures, as well as Christ and Salvation to dispense. The world is full of its *left hand* favours; but the blessings of its *right hand* are

are invaluably precious, and few there be that receive them. It doth thouſands of kind offices for men; but among them all, this is the chiefeſt, to lead and direct them to Chriſt. For conſider,

(1.) Of all mercies, this comes through moſt and greateſt difficulties, *Eph.* 1. 19, 20.

(2.) This is a ſpiritual mercy, excelling in dignity of nature all others, more than *gold* excels the *dirt* under your feet, *Rev.* 3. 18. One ſuch gift, is worth thouſands of other mercies.

(3.) This is a mercy immediately flowing out of the fountain of Gods *electing love*, a mercy never dropt into any, but an Elect Veſſel, 1 *Theſſ.* 1. 4, 5.

(4.) This is a mercy, that infallibly ſecures Salvation; for as we may argue from Converſion to Election, looking back, ſo from Converſion to Salvation, looking forward, *Heb.* 6. 9.

(5.) Laſtly, This is an Eternal mercy, that which will ſtick by you, when Father, Mother, Wife, Children, Eſtate, Honours, Health and Life ſhall fail thee, *John* 4. 14.

O therefore ſet a ſpecial Mark upon that Providence, that ſet you in the way of this mercy. It hath performed that for thee, which all the Miniſters on Earth, and Angels in Heaven could never have performed. This is a Mercy, that puts weight and value into the ſmalleſt Circumſtance that relates to it.

The Fifth Performance of Providence.

V.

THus you hear, how inſtrumental Providence hath been, in ordering the Means and Occaſions of the greateſt Mercies for your ſouls. Let us now take into conſideration, another excellent Performance of Providence reſpecting the good of your bodies and ſouls too, *in reſpect of that Imployment and Calling it hath ordered for you in this world*; for it hath not only

Providential performances with reſpect to our Civil Calling.

only an Eye upon your well being in the *world to come*, but upon your well being in *this world* alſo; and that very much depends upon the Station and Vocation to which it calls you.

Now the Providence of God with reſpect to our civil Callings, may be diſplayed very takingly in the following particulars.

(1.) In directing you to a Calling in your Youth, and not ſuffering you to live an idle, uſeleſs and ſinful life, as many do, who are but burthens to the Earth, *fruges conſumere nati*, the Wens of the body politick, ſerving only to disfigure and drein it, to eat what others earn. Sin brought in ſweat, *Gen.* 3. 19. but now, not to ſweat increaſeth ſin, 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 12. He that lives *idly*, cannot live *honeſtly*; as is plainly enough intimated, 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 11, 12. But when God puts men into a lawful Calling, wherein the labours of their hands or heads is ſufficient for them, it is a very valuable mercy: for thereby they *eat their own bread*, 2 Theſſ. 3. 12. Many a ſad Temptation is happily prevented; and they are ordinarily furniſhed by it, for works of mercy to others, and ſurely it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.

(2.) In ordering you to ſuch *Callings* and *Imployments* in the world, as are, not only *lawful* in themſelves, but moſt *ſuitable* to you. There be many perſons imployed in *ſinful* Trades and Arts, meerly to furniſh other mens luſts: they do not only ſin in their Imployments; but their very Imployments are ſinful: they trade for Hell, and are Factors for the Devil. *Demetrius* and the Crafts-men at *Epheſus*, got their Eſtates by makeing *Shrines* for *Diana*, Acts 19. 24, 25. (*i. e.*) little caſes, or boxes with folding leaves, within which the *Image* of that *Idol* ſate enſhrined. Theſe were carried about by the People in Proceſſion, in honour of their Idol. And at this day, how many wicked Arts and Imployments are there invented, (and multitudes of perſons maintained by them) meerly to gratifie the pride and wantonneſs of a debauched age?

Now

Now to have an honeſt lawful imployment, wherein you do not diſhonour God in benefiting your ſelves, is no ſmall mercy.

But if it be not only lawful in it ſelf, but ſuited to your *genius* and ſtrength, there is a double mercy in it. Some poor Creatures are engaged in Callings, that eat up their time and ſtrength, and make their lives very uncomfortable to them: they have not only *ſpending* and waſting Imployments in the world; but ſuch as allow them little or no time for their *general Calling*: and yet all this doth but keep them and theirs alive. Oh therefore, if God have fitted you with an honeſt Imployment, wherein you have leſs toil than others, and more time for Heavenly Exerciſes, aſcribe this benefit to the ſpecial care of Providence for you.

(3.) In ſetling you in ſuch an Imployment and Calling in the world, as poſſibly neither your ſelves nor *Parents* could ever expect you ſhould arrive to. There are among us ſuch perſons, as on this account are ſignally obliged to Divine Providence. God hath put them into ſuch a way, as neither they nor their Parents ever projected. For, look as the *Flower-de-luce* in the Compaſs, turns now this way, then that way, and never ceaſes moving, till it ſettle to the *North point*; juſt ſo it is in our ſetlement in the world. A Child is now deſigned for this, then for that, but at laſt ſetles in that way of Imployment which Providence deſigned him to. How ſtrangely are things wheeled about by Providence! not what we, or our Parents, but what God deſigned ſhall take place. *Amos* was very meanly employed at firſt, but God deſigned him for a more honourable and comfortable Calling, *Amos* 7.14,15. *David* followed the Ewes, and likely never raiſed his thoughts to higher things in the dayes of his youth; but God made him the Royal Shepherd of a better flock, *Pſalm* 78.70,71. *Peter* and *Andrew* were imployed as Fiſher-men, but *Chriſt* calls them from that to an higher Calling, *Matth.* 4. 18, 19. to be fiſhers of men. *Pareus* when he was fourteen years old, was by the inſtigation of his *Step-mother*, placed with an

Apo-

Apothecary; but Providence ſo wrought, that he was taken off from that, and fitted for the Miniſtry; wherein he became a fruitful and eminent Inſtrument to the Church. *James Andreas* was by reaſon of his Fathers inability to keep him at School, deſigned for a *Carpenter*; but was afterwards by the perſwaſion of friends, and aſſiſtance of the Church-ſtock ſent to *Stutgard*, and thence to the Univerſity, and ſo arrived to a very eminent ſtation of ſervice to the Church. A maſter builder *Oecolampadius* was by his *Father* deſigned for a *Merchant*; but his *Mother* by earneſt entreaties, prevailed to keep him at School: and this Man was a bleſſed Inſtrument in the reformation of Religion. I might eaſily cite multitudes of ſuch Inſtances; but a taſte may ſuffice.

(4.) In ſecuring your Eſtates from ruine, Job 1. 10. *Haſt thou not made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?* This is the Encloſure of Providence, which ſecures to us, what by its favour we acquire in the way of honeſt induſtry.

(5.) In making your Calling ſufficient for you. It was the prayer of *Moſes* for the Tribe of *Judah*, Exod. 33. 7. *Let his hands be ſufficient for him:* and it is no ſmall mercy, if yours be ſo to you. Some there be that have work, but not ſtrength to go through with it; others have ſtrength, but no imployment for it. Some have hands, and work for them; but it's not ſufficient for them and theirs. If God bleſs your labours, ſo as to give you and yours neceſſary ſupports, and comfort in the world by it, it's a choice Providence, and with all thankfulneſs to be acknowledged.

Object. 1. Object. 1. IF any that fear God ſhall complain, *That although they have a Calling, yet it is an hard and laborious one, which takes up too much of their time, which they would gladly imploy in other, and better work.* I anſwer,

Sol. (1.) It's like, the Wiſdom of Providence fore ſaw this

this to be the moſt ſuitable and proper Imployment for you; and if you had more eaſe and reſt, you might have more temptations than now you have: the ſtrength and time which is now taken up in your daily labours, wherein you ſerve God, might otherwayes have been ſpent upon ſuch luſts wherein you might have ſerved the Devil.

(2.) Hereby it may be, your health is the better preſerved, and natural refreſhments made the ſweeter to you, Eccleſ. 5. 12. *The ſleep of a labouring man is ſweet to him, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich, will not ſuffer him to ſleep.*

(3.) And as to the ſervice of God, if your hearts be ſpiritual, you may enjoy much Communion with God in your very Imployments, and you have ſome intervals and reſpits for that purpoſe. Have you not more ſpare hours, than you imploy to that end?

Object. 2. *BUt all my labours will ſcarcely ſuffice, to procure me and mine the Neceſſaries of life. I am kept ſhort and low to what others are; and this is a ſad affliction.* Object. 2.

Though the Wiſdom of Providence hath ordered you a lower, and poorer condition than others, yet (1.) Conſider how many there be that are lower than you in the world: you have but little of the world; yet others have leſs. Read the deſcription of thoſe perſons, *Job* 30. 4, &c. (2.) If God have given you but a ſmall portion of the world; yet if you be godly, he hath promiſed never to forſake you, *Heb.* 13. 5. (3.) Providence hath ordered that condition for you, which is really beſt for your eternal good. If you had more of the world than you have, your heads and hearts might not be able to manage it to your advantage. A ſmall *Boat* muſt have but a narrow *Sail.* You have not wanted hitherto the neceſſaries of life, and are commanded, *having food and rayment* (though none of the fineſt) *to be therewith content.* Sol.

content. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked, Pſal. 37. 16. better in the *Acquiſition*, ſweeter in the *Fruition*, and more comfortable in the *Account*.

Well then, if Providence hath ſo diſpoſed of you all, that you can eat your own bread, and ſo advantagiouſly directed ſome of you to imployments, that afford not only neceſſaries for your ſelves and families, but an overplus for works of mercy to others, and all this brought about for you in a way you did not project; let God be owned, and honoured in this Providence. Will you not henceforth call him, *My Father, the Guide of my youth*? as it is Jer. 3. 4. Surely, it was the Lord that guided you to ſetle as you did in thoſe dayes of your youth: You reap at this day, and may to your laſt day, the fruits of thoſe early Providences in your youth.

NOw ſee that you walk anſwerably to the obligations of Providence in this particular; and ſee to it in the fear of God, that you abuſe not any of thoſe things to *his diſhonour*, which he hath wrought for *your comfort*. To prevent which, I will here drop a few needful Cautions, and ſhut up this particular.

1. *Caution* Be not ſlothful and idle in your *Vocations*. It's ſaid, *Auguſtus* built an *Apragapolis*, a City void of buſineſs; but I am ſure God never erected any City, Town or Family to that end. The Command to *Adam*, Gen. 3. 19. no doubt reaches all his poſterity: and Goſpel-Commands back and ſecond it upon Chriſtians, Rom. 12. 11. and 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 11. If you be negligent, you cannot be innocent. And yet,

2. *Caution* Be not ſo intent upon your *particular* Callings, as to make them interfere with your *general* Calling. Beware you loſe not your God in the Crowd and hurry of Earthly buſineſs. Mind that ſolemn warning, 1 Tim. 6. 9. *But they that will be rich fall into Temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which*

which drown men in deſtruction and perdition. The inhabitants of *O Enoc*, a dry Iſland near *Athens*, beſtowed much labour to draw in a River to water it, and make it fruitful; but when the Sluces were opened, the waters flowed ſo abundantly, that it overflowed the Iſland, and drowned the Inhabitants. The application is obvious. It was an excellent ſaying of *Seneca, rebus non me trado, ſed commodo.* I don't give, but lend my ſelf to buſineſs.

Remember alwayes, the ſucceſs of your Callings and earthly Imployments is by Divine bleſſing, not humane diligence alone; Deut. 8. 18. *Thou ſhalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.* The Devil himſelf was ſo far Orthodox, as to acknowledge it, Job 1. 10. *Haſt not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his houſe, and about all that he hath on every ſide? Thou haſt bleſſed the work of his hands,* &c. Recommend therefore your affairs to God by prayer, according to Pſal. 37. 4, 5. *Delight thy ſelf alſo in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the deſires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* And touch not with that which you cannot recommend to God by Prayer for a bleſſing. 3. *Caution*

Be well ſatisfied in that Station and Imployment in which Providence hath placed you; and do not ſo much as wiſh your ſelves in another, 1 Cor. 7. 20. *Let every man abide in the ſame Calling, wherein he was called.* Providence is wiſer than you and may be confident hath ſuited all things better to your Eternal good, than you could do, had you been left to your own option. 4. *Caution*

The Sixth Performance of Providence.

VI.

THus you ſee, the care Providence hath had over you in your youth, in reſpect of that Civil Imployment to which it guided us in thoſe dayes.

We

Providential performances with reſpect to our Civil Relations.

We will in the next place conſider it *as our Guide, and the Orderer of our Relations for us.* That Providence hath a ſpecial hand in this matter, is evident both from Scripture aſſertions, and the acknowledgements of holy men, who in that great concernment of their lives, have ſtill owned, and acknowledged the directing hand of Providence. Take an inſtance of both. The Scripture plainly aſſerts the dominion of Providence over this affair in Prov. 19. 14. *A prudent Wife is from the Lord:* and Prov. 18. 22. *Whoſo findeth a Wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.* So for Children, ſee Pſal. 127. 3. *Lo, Children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the Womb is his reward.*

And it hath ever been the practice of holy men, to ſeek the Lord for direction and counſel, when they have been upon the change of their condition. No doubt but *Abraham*'s encouragement in that caſe was the fruit of prayer, *Gen.* 24. 7. His pious ſervant alſo, who was imployed in that affair, did both earneſtly ſeek counſel of God, *Gen* 24. 12. and thankfully acknowledge his gracious Providence in guiding it, *Ver.* 26, 27.

The ſame we may obſerve in Children, the fruit of marriage, 1 *Sam.* 1. 20. *Luke* 1. 13, 14. Now the Providence of God may be divers wayes diſplayed for the engadging of our hearts in love to the God of our mercies.

(1.) There is very much of Providence ſeen in appointing the Parties each for other. In this, the Lord goes oftentimes beyond our thoughts and projections; yea, and oftentimes croſſes mens deſires and deſigns to their great advantage. Not what they fancy; but what his infinite wiſdom judges beſt, and moſt beneficial for them takes place. Hence it is, that probabilities are ſo often daſhed; and things remote and utterly improbable are brought about, in very ſtrange and unaccountable methods of Providence.

(2.) There is much of Providence ſeen in the harmony and agreeableneſs of tempers and diſpoſitions; from

from whence a very great part of the tranquillity and comforts of our lives reſults: or at leaſt, though natural tempers and educations did not ſo much harmonize before, yet they do ſo after they come under the Ordinance of God, Gen. 2. 24. *They two ſhall be one fleſh*, not one only in reſpect of Gods *inſtitution*, but one in reſpect of love and *affection*, that thoſe who ſo lately were meer ſtrangers to each other, are now endeared to a degree beyond the neareſt relations in blood. *Vide ſupra*, *For this cauſe ſhall a man leave Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave to his Wife, and they two ſhall be one fleſh.*

(3.) But eſpecially, Providence is remarkable, in making one inſtrumental to the eternal good of the other, 1 Cor. 7. 16. *How knoweſt thou, O Wife, but thou maiſt ſave thy Husband? or how knoweſt thou, O Man, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy Wife?* Hence is that grave Exhortation to the Wives of unbelieving Huſbands, 1 *Pet.* 3. 1. to win them by their converſation, which ſhould be to them in ſtead of an ordinance.

Or if both be gracious, then what ſingular aſſiſtance and mutual help is hereby gained to the furtherance of their Eternal good? Whilſt they live together *as Heirs of the grace of life*, 1 Pet. 3. 7. O bleſſed Providence! that directed ſuch into ſo intimate relation on Earth, who ſhall inherit together the *common Salvation* in Heaven!

(4.) How much of Providence is ſeen in *Children* the fruit of *Marriage*? To have any Poſterity in the Earth, and not be left altogether as a dry tree: To have comfort and joy in them, is a ſpecial Providence, importing a ſpecial mercy to us. To have the breaches made upon our Families repaired, is a Providence to be owned with a thankful heart. When God ſhall ſay to a man, as he ſpeaks in another caſe to the *Church*, Iſa. 49. 20. *The Children which thou ſhalt have after thou haſt loſt the other, ſhall ſay again in thine ears, the place is to ſtrait for me*, &c.

And theſe Providences will appear more affectingly ſweet and lovely to you, if you but compare its

its allotments to you, with what it hath allotted to many others in the world. For do but look abroad, and you ſhall find,

(1.) Multitudes unequally yoked, to the imbittering of their lives, whoſe Relations are clogs and hinderances both in Temporals and Spirituals. Yea, we find an account in Scripture of gracious perſons, a great part of whoſe comfort in this world hath been ſplit upon this Rock. *Abigail* was a *diſcreet* and *vertuous* Woman, but very unſuitably matched to a *churliſh Nabal*; ſee 1 *Sam.* 25. 25. What a temptation to the neglect of a known duty, prevail'd upon the renowned *Moſes*, by the means of *Zipporah* his Wife? *Exod.* 4. 24, 25. *David* had his ſcoffing *Michal*, 2 *Sam.* 6. 20. And patient *Job* no ſmall addition to all his other afflictions, from the *Wife* of his boſom, who ſhould have been a ſupport to him in the day of his trouble, *Job* 19. 17.

No doubt, but God ſanctifies ſuch rods to his Peoples good. If *Socrates* knew how to improve his affliction in his *Zantippe*, to the increaſe of his patience; much more will they who converſe with God under all Providences, whether ſweet or bitter. Nevertheleſs this muſt be acknowledged to be a ſad ſtroke upon any perſon, and ſuch as maims them upon the working hand, by unfitting them for duty, 1 *Pet.* 3. 7. and cuts off much of the comfort of life alſo.

(2.) How many are there, who never enjoy the comfortable fruits of Marriage? but are denyed the ſight, at leaſt, the enjoyment of Children, Jer. 22. 30. *Thus ſaith the Lord, write this man Childleſs*, &c. or if they have Children, yet cannot enjoy them, Hoſea 9. 12. *Though they bring up Children, yet will I bereave them, that there ſhall not be a man left*; who only bear for the grave, and have their expectations raiſed for a greater affliction to themſelves.

(3.) And it is no rare or unuſual thing to ſee Children and near Relations the greateſt Inſtruments of affliction to their Parents and Friends: ſo that after all their other ſorrows and troubles

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in the World, neareſt Relations bring up the rear of ſorrows (as One ſpeaks) and prove greater griefs than any other. O how many *Parents* have complained with the Tree in the Fable, that their very hearts have been rived aſunder with thoſe Wedges that were cut out of their own bodies? What a grief was *Eſau* to *Iſaac* and *Rebecka*? Gen. 26. 34, 35. What a ſcourge were *Abſalom* and *Amnon* to *David*? Mr. T. C. in his *Iſagoge.*

Well then, if God have ſet *the ſolitary in Families*, as it is *Pſal.* 68. 6. built an houſe for the deſolate, given you comfortable relations, which are ſprings of daily comfort and refreſhment to you, you are upon many accounts engaged to walk anſwerably to theſe gracious Providences. And that you may underſtand wherein that *decorum* and agreeable comportment with theſe Providences conſiſts, take up the ſenſe of your duty in theſe brief hints.

(1.) Aſcribe to God the glory of all thoſe Providential works which yield you comfort. You ſee a wiſe, directing, governing Providence, which hath diſpoſed and ordered all things beyond your own projects and deſigns. *The way of man is not in himſelf, nor is it in him that walketh to direct his own ſteps*, Jer. 10. 23. Not what you projected, but what an higher counſel than yours determined, is come to paſs. Good *Jacob* when God had made him the Father of a Family, admired God in the mercy, Gen. 32. 10. *With my ſtaff* (ſaid he) *I paſſed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.* And how doth this mercy humble and melt him? *I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou haſt ſhewed unto thy ſervant.* (1.)

Be exact in diſcharging the duties of thoſe Relations which ſo gracious a Providence hath led you into. Abuſe not the effects of ſo much mercy and love to you. The Lord expects praiſe, where ever you have comfort. This aggravated *David*'s ſin, that he ſhould dare to abuſe ſo great love and mercy, as God had ſhewn him in his Family Relations, 2 *Sam.* 12. 7, 8, 9. (2.)

Improve Relations to the end Providence deſigned them. (3.)

them. Walk together as Co-heirs of the grace of life; ſtudy to be mutual bleſſings to each other: ſo walk in your Relations, that the parting day may be ſweet. Death will ſhortly break up the Family; and then nothing but the ſenſe of duty diſcharged, or the neglect pardoned, will give comfort.

The Seventh Performance of Providence.

VII.

Providential proviſion for us and ours.

YOu have heard how well Providence hath performed its part for you, in planting you into families, who once were ſolitary. Now let us in the next place view another gracious performance of Providence for us, *in making proviſion from time to time for us and our Families.* I the rather put theſe Providences together in this place, becauſe I find the Scripture doth ſo, Pſalm 107. 41. *He ſetteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.*

You know the Promiſes God hath made to his People, Pſal. 34. 10. *The young Lions ſhall lack, and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord, ſhall not want any good thing.* And have you not alſo ſeen the conſtant performance of it? Cannot you give the ſame anſwer, if the ſame queſtion were propounded to you that the Diſciples did, Luke 22. 35. *Since I ſent you forth, lacked ye any thing? and they ſaid, nothing.* Can ye not with *Jacob*, call him, *the God that fed you all your life long?* Gen. 48. 15. Surely *he hath given bread to them that fear him, and been ever mindful of his Covenant*, Pſal. 111. 5.

To diſplay this Providence, we will conſider it in the following particulars.

(1.) The *aſſiduity* and *conſtancy* of the care of Providence for the Saints, Lam. 3. 23. *His mercies are new every morning.* It is not the ſupply of one or two preſſing needs, but all your wants, as they grow from day

day to day through all your dayes, Gen. 48. 15. *The God that fed me all my life long.* The care of Providence runs parallel with the line of life. See Isa. 46. 3, 4. *Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carryed from the Womb: and even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you.* So that as God bid *Israel*, Micah 6. 5. *to remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, that they might know the faithfulness of the Lord*; so would I perswade thee, Reader, to record the wayes of Providence, from first to last, throughout thy whole course to this day, that thou maist see what a God he hath been to thee.

(2.) The seasonableness, and opportuneness of its provisions for them: for so runs the promise, Isa. 41. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them*; and so hath the performance of it been. And this hath been made good to distressed Saints sometimes in a more *ordinary way*, God secretly blessing a little, and making it sufficient for us and ours: *Job* tells us of *the secret of God upon his Tabernacle*, Job 29. 4. (*i. e.*) his secret blessing is in their *Tabernacles*; by reason whereof it is that they subsist; but it is in an unaccountable way that they do so. And sometimes in an *extraordinary* way it breaks forth for their supply. So you find in 2 *Kings* 17. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. the Cruse and Barrel fail not.

Mr. *Samuel Clarke*, in the Life of that painful and humble servant of Christ Mr. *John Fox*, records a memorable Instance of Providence, and it is this. That towards the end of King *Henry* the Eighth his Reign he went to *London*, where he quickly spent that little his friends had given him, or he had acquired by his own diligence, and began to be in great want. As one day he sate in *Paul's Church*, spent with long fasting, his countenance thin, and his eyes hollow, after the ghastful *Clark's Lives, Vol.* 1. p. 342.

ghastful manner of dying men, every one shunning a Spectacle of so much horror: There came one to him, whom he had never seen before, and thrust an untold summ of money into his hand, bidding him, be of good cheer, and accept that small gift in good part from his Countrey-man; and that he should make much of himself, for that within a few dayes new hopes were at hand, and a more certain condition of livelihood. Thtee dayes after the *Dutches* of *Richmond* sent for him to live in her house, and be *Tutor* tothe *Earl* of *Surrey*'s Children, then under her care.

Mr. *Isaac Ambrose* a worthy Divine, whose labours have made him acceptable to his generation, in his Epistle to the *Earl of Bedford* prefixed to his *Last things*, gives a pregnant Instance in his own case; his words are these; *For mine own part* (saith he) *however the Lord hath seen cause to give me but a poor pittance of outward things, for which I bless his name; yet in the income thereof, I have many times observed so much of his peculiar* Providence, *that thereby they have been very much sweetned, and my heart hath been raised to admire his grace. When of late under an hard dispensation (which I judge not meet to mention) wherein I suffered conscienciously) all streams of wonted supplyes being stopt, the waters of relief for my self and family did run low: I went to bed with some staggerings and doubtings of the Fountains letting out it self for our refreshing: but e're I did awake in the morning, a Letter was brought to my bed side, which was signed by a choice friend* Mr. Anthony Ash, *which reported some unexpected breakings out of Gods goodness for my comfort. These are some of his lines* ——— *Your God who hath given you an heart thankfully to record your experiences of his goodness, doth renew experiences for your encouragement. Now I shall report one, which will raise your spirit toward the God of your mercies.* Whereupon he sweetly concludes, *One morsel of Gods provision especially when it comes in unexpected, and upon prayer when wants are most, will be more sweet to a spiritual relish, than all former enjoyments were.*

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(3.) The Wisdom of Providence in our provisions. And this is discovered in two things: (1.) In proportioning the quantity, not satisfying our extravagant *wishes*, but answering our real *needs*; consulting our *wants*, not our *wantonness*, Phil. 4. 19. *My God shall supply all your wants*, and this hath exactly suited the wishes of the best and wisest men, who desired no more at its hand. So *Jacob*, *Gen.* 28. 20. and *Agur*, *Prov.* 30. 8, 9. Wise Providence considers our condition as *Pilgrims* and *Strangers*, and so allots the *Viaticum* provision, that is needful for our passage home. It knows the mischievous influence of fulness and redundancy upon most men, though sanctified; and how apt it is to make them remiss, and forgetful of God, *Deut.* 6. 12. that their hearts, like the *Moon*, suffers an Eclipse when it is at the full; and so suits and orders all to their best advantage. (2.) Its Wisdom is much discovered in the manner of dispensing our portion to us. It many times suffers our wants to pinch hard, and many fears to arise, out of design to magnifie the care and love of God in the supply, Deut. 8. 3. Providence so orders the case, that faith and prayer coming betwixt our wants and supplies, the goodness of God may be the more magnified in our eyes thereby.

And now let me beg you to consider the good hand of Providence, that hath provided for, and suitably supplyed you and yours all your dayes, and never failed you hitherto: and labour to walk suitably to your experiences of such mercies. In order whereunto, let me press a few suitable Cautions upon you.

Beware, that you forget not the care and kindness of Providence which your eyes have seen in so many fruits and experiences thereof. It was Gods charge against *Israel*, Psal. 106. 13. *that they soon forgat his* wondrous *works*. A bad heart and a slippery memory, deprive men of the comfort of many mercies, and defraud God of the glory due for them. (1.)

Do not distrust Providence in future exigencies. Thus they did, Psal. 78. 20. *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed:* (2.)

can he give bread alſo; can he provide fleſh for his people? How unreaſonable and abſurd are theſe queries of unbelief, eſpecially after their eyes had ſeen the power of God in ſuch extraordinary effects?

(3.) Do not murmur and regret under new ſtraits. This is a vile temper; and yet how incident to us, when wants preſs hard upon us! Ah! did we but rightly underſtand what the demerit of ſin is, we would rather admire the bounty of God, than complain of the ſtrait-handedneſs of Providence. And if we did but conſider, that there lyes upon God no obligation of Juſtice or Gratitude to reward any of our duties, it would cure our murmurs, Gen. 32. 10.

(4.) Do not ſhew the leaſt diſcontent at the lot and portion Providence carves out to you. O that you would be well pleaſed and ſatisfied with all its appointments. Say as Pſal. 16. 6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleaſant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.* Surely that is beſt for you, which Providence hath appointed, and one day you your ſelves will judge it ſo to be.

(5.) Do not neglect Prayer when ſtraits befal you. You ſee it's Providence diſpenſes all, you live upon it; therefore apply your ſelves to God in the times of need This is evidently included in the *Promiſe*, Iſa. 41. 17 as well as expreſſed in the Command, Phil. 4. 6. Remember God, and he will not forget you.

(6.) Do not diſtract your hearts with ſinful cares, *Matth.* 6. 25, 26. Conſider *the fowls of the Air*, (ſaith Chriſt) not the fowls at the *Door*, that are daily fed by hand; but thoſe of the *Air*, that know not where to have the next meal; and yet God provides for them. Remember your relation to Chriſt, and his engagements by promiſe to you, and by theſe things work your hearts to ſatisfaction and content with all the allotments of Providence.

The Eighth Performance of Providence.

VIII.

THe next great advantage and mercy the Saints receive from the hand of Providence, is *in their preservation from the snares, and temptations of sin, by its preventing care over them.* That Providence wards off many a deadly stroke of Temptation, and puts by many a mortal thrust which Satan makes at our souls, is a truth as manifest as the light that shineth. This is included in that promise, 1 Cor. 10. 13. God will *with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Providence gives an out-let for the souls escape, when it is shut up into the dangerous straits of Temptation. There are two eminent wayes whereby the force and efficacy of temptation is broken in believers. One is by the operation of internal grace, Gal. 5. 17. *The Spirit lusteth against the flesh*; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (*i. e.*) Sanctification gives sin a miscarrying womb after it hath conceived in the soul. The other way, is by the external working of Providence; and of this I am here engaged to speak.

Providential performances in our preservation from the power of Temptation.

The Providence of God is the great *Obex* and hinderance to a world of sin, which else would break forth like an overflowing flood from our corrupt natures. It prevents abundance of sin, which else wicked men would commit, Gen. 19. 11. The *Sodomites* were greedily pursuing their lusts: God providentially hinders it, by smiting them blind. *Jeroboam* intends to smite the *Prophet*; Providence interpos'd, and wither'd his arm, 1 *Kings* 13. 4. Thus you see, when wicked men have contrived, and are ready to execute their wickedness, Providence claps on its manacles, *that their hands cannot perform their enterprises*, as it is *Job* 5. 12.

And so much corruption there remains in good

men, that they would certainly plunge themſelves under much more guilt than they do, if Providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themſelves: for though they make conſcience of keeping themſelves, and daily watch their hearts and wayes, yet ſuch is the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that if Providence did not lay blocks in their way, it would (more frequently than it doth) entangle and defile them. And this is doth divers wayes.

(1.) Sometimes by ſtirring up others to interpoſe with ſeaſonable counſels, which effectually diſſwade them from proſecuting an evil deſign. Thus *Abigail* meets *David* in the nick of time, and diſſwades him from his evil purpoſe, 1 *Sam.* 25. 34.

And I find it recorded (as on another account was noted before) of that holy man Mr *Dod*, that being late at night in his Study, he was ſtrongly moved (though at an unſeaſonable hour) to viſit a *Gentleman* of his acquaintance; and not knowing what might be the deſign of Providence therein, he obeyed, and went; when he came to the houſe, after a few knocks at the door, the *Gentleman* himſelf came to him, and askt him, whether he had any buſineſs to him: Mr. *Dod* anſwered, no; but that he could not be quiet till he had ſeen him. O Sir, (reply'd the *Gentleman*,) you are ſent of God at this hour, for juſt now (and with that, takes the Halter out of his pocket,) I was going to deſtroy my ſelf. And thus was the miſchief prevented.

(2.) Sometimes by hindering the Means and Inſtruments, whereby the Evil it ſelf is prevented. Thus, when good *Jehoſaphat* had joyned himſelf with that wicked King *Ahaziah*, to build Ships at *Ezion-Gaber* to go to *Tarſhiſh*, God prevents the deſign, by breaking the Ships with a ſtorm, as you read, 2 *Chron.* 20. 35, 36, 37.

We find alſo in the Life of Mr. *Bolton*, written by Mr. *Bagſhaw*, That whilſt he was in *Oxford*, he had familiar acquaintance with Mr. *Anderton*, a good Scholar, but a ſtrong *Papiſt*, who knowing Mr. *Bolton*'s good parts, and perceiving that he was in

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ſome outward wants, took this advantage, and uſed many arguments to perſwade him to be reconciled to the Church of *Rome*, and to go over with him to the *Engliſh Seminary*, aſſuring him he ſhould be furniſhed with all neceſſaries, and have gold enough. Mr. *Bolton* being at that time, poor in mind and purſe, accepted the motion, and a day and place was appointed in *Lancaſhire*, where they ſhould meet and take ſhipping and be gone: but Mr. *Anderton* came not, and ſo he eſcaped the ſnare.

(3.) Sometimes by laying ſome ſtrong affliction upon the body, to prevent a worſe evil. And this is the meaning of *Hoſea* 2. 6. *I will hedge up her way with thorns.* Thus *Baſil* was a long time exerciſed with a violent head-ach, which (as he obſerved) was uſed by Providence to prevent Luſt. *Paul* had a thorn in the fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan ſent to buffet him: and this affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent pride in him, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7.

Some afflictions are *timoriai*, puniſhments; others are *paidiai*, chaſtiſements, and theſe are both *dokimaſiai*, tryals of grace, and *prophulaktika*, preſervatives from ſin.

(4.) Sometimes ſin is prevented in the Saints, by the better information of their minds at the Sacred *Oracles* of God. Thus, when ſinful motions began to riſe in *David*'s mind, from the proſperity of the wicked, and his own afflicted ſtate, and grew to that height, that he began to think, all he had done in the way of religion, was little better than loſt labour; he is ſet right again, and the temptation diſſolved, by going into the *Sanctuary*, where God ſhewed him how to take new meaſures of perſons and things; to judge them by their ends and iſſues, not their preſent appearances, P*ſal.* 73. 12, 13, 17.

(5.) And ſometimes the Providence of God prevents the ſins of his people, by removing them out of the way of Temptations by death. In which ſenſe we may underſtand that Text, Iſa. 57. 1. *The Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come*; the evil of *Sin* as well as *Sufferings*. When the Lord ſees his people low ſpirited, and not able to grapple with ſtrong tryals and temptations which are drawing on, it is with reſpect to them a merciful

Providence, to be disbanded by death, and set out of harms way.

Now consider, and admire the Providedce of God, O ye Saints, who hath had more care of your souls, than ever ye had of them. Had not the Providence of God thus wrought for you in a way of prevention, it may be you had this day been so many *Magor Missabibs.* How was the heart of *David* melted under that preventing Providence fore-mentioned in 1 *Sam.* 25. 34. He blesses the Lord, the Instrument, and the Counsel by which his soul was preserved from sin. Do but seriously bethink your selves of a few particulars about this case. As,

(1.) How your corrupt natures have often impetuously hurried you on towards sin, so that all the inherent grace you had, could not withstand its force, if Providencr had not prevented it in some such method as you have heard, Jam. 1. 14. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* You found your selves but feathers in the wind of temptation.

(2.) How near you have been brought to the brink of sin, and yet saved by a merciful hand of Providence. May you not say with him in Prov. 5. 14. *I was almost in the midst of all evil:* or as Psal. 73. 2. *My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slidden.* O merciful Providence! that stept in so opportunely to your relief.

(3.) How many have been suffered to fall by the hand of Temptations to the reproach of Religion, and wounding of their own Consciences, to that degree, that they have never recovered former peace again; but lived in the world devoid of comfort to their dying day?

(4.) How woful your case had been, if the Lord had not mercifully saved you from many thousand temptations, that have assaulted you? I tell you, you cannot estimate the mercies you possess by means of such Providences. Are your names sweet, and your Consciences peaceful, two mercies as dear to you as your

your two eyes? Why ſurely, you owe them, if not wholly, yet in great meaſure, to the aids and aſſiſtances Providence hath given you all along the way you have paſſed through the dangerous tempting World to this day.

Walk therefore ſuitably to this Obligation of Providence alſo: and ſee,

(1.) That you thankfully own it. Don't impute your eſcapes from ſin to accidents, or to your own watchfulneſs or wiſdom.

(2.) See that you tempt not Providence on the other hand, by an irregular relyance upon its care over you, without taking all due care of your ſelves. *Keep your ſelves in the love of God*, Jude 21. *Keep your hearts with all diligence*, Prov. 4. 23. Though Providence keep you, yet it is in the way of your duty.

The Ninth Performance of Providence.

IX.

THus you ſee what care Providence hath had over your ſouls, in *preventing the ſpiritual dangers and miſeries that elſe would have befallen you in the way of temptation:* in the next place I will ſhew you, that it hath been *no leſs careful for your bodies, and with how great tenderneſs it hath carried them in its arms through innumerable hazards and dangers alſo.* He is called *the keeper of Iſrael that never ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth*, Pſal. 121. 4. *the preſerver of men*, Job 7. 20. To diſplay the glory of this Providence before you, let us take into conſideration, The perils into which the beſt of men ſometimes fall, and the way and means by which Providence preſerves them in thoſe dangers.

Providential preventions of bodily dangers.

Pſal. 17. 8. *Thou keepeſt me as the apple of thine eye.*

The eye hath five Tunicks to guard it againſt danger.

(1.) *Aranea tunica*, like a Spiders web. (2.) *Retiformis*: like a net, (3.) *Uvea*, like a berry. (4.) *Cornea*, like an horn. (5.) *Adnata tunica*, the cover or lid of the eye: here is guard upon guard, reſembling the various wayes Providence hath to ſecure us from ruine.

There are manifold hazards into which we are often caſt in this world. The Apoſtle *Paul* gives us a general account of his dangers, in 2 *Cor.* 11. 26. And how great a wonder is it, that our life hath not been extinguiſhed in ſome of thoſe dangers we have been in? For,

See *Job* 33. 18, 19, 20, 21. & 28. Mr. *T. Goodwin* in his Aggravation of ſin againſt mercy, p. 30.

(1.) Have not ſome of us fallen, and that often into very dangerous ſickneſſes and diſeaſes, in which we have approached to the very brink of the grave? and have or might have ſaid with *Hezekiah*, Iſa. 38. 10. *I ſaid in the cutting off of my dayes, I ſhall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the reſidue of my years.* Have we not often had the ſentence of death in our ſelves? and our bodies at that time been like a leaky Ship in a ſtorm (as One aptly reſembles it) that hath taken in water on every ſide, till it was ready to ſink? Yet hath God preſerved, careened, and lanched us out again as well as ever. Oh what a wonder is it, that ſuch a crazy body ſhould be preſerved for ſo many years, and ſurvive ſo many dangers! Surely; it is not more admirable to ſee a *Venice-glaſs* paſs from hand to hand in continual uſe for forty or fifty years, and ſtill to remain whole, notwithſtanding many knocks and falls it hath had. If you enjoy health or recover out of ſickneſſes, it is becauſe *he puts none of theſe diſeaſes upon thee*, or becauſe he is *the Lord thy Phyſician*, Exod. 15. 26.

The Eye is but a ſmall part of the body, yet Phyſicians reckon no leſs than thirty diſeaſes incident to it. *Naſcuntur in eo lencoma, glaucoma, cippitudo, xerophthalmia, ſcirr. lithiaſis, epiphora & triginta id genus alia.*

(2.) And how many deadly dangers hath his hand reſcued ſome of you from, in thoſe years of confuſion and publick calamity, when the Sword was bathed in blood, and made horrid ſlaughter, when it may be, your lives were often given you for a prey? This *David* put a ſpecial remarque upon, Pſal. 140. 7. *O God the Lord, the ſtrength of my ſalvation; thou haſt covered my head in the day of Battel.*

Beza being in *France* in the firſt *Civil War*, and there toſſed up and down for two and twenty months, recorded ſix hundred deliverances from dangers in that ſpace, for which he ſolemnly gave Gods thanks in his laſt Teſtament. If the Sword deſtroyed you not, it

was

was becauſe God did not give it a Commiſſion ſo to do.

(3.) Many of you have ſeen wonders of ſalvation upon the deeps, where the hand of God hath been ſignally ſtretched forth for your reſcue and deliverance. This is elegantly expreſſed in *Pſal.* 107. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. (which I have * elſewhere opened at large) concerning which, you may ſay in a *proper* ſenſe, what the P*ſalmiſt* doth *metaphorically*, Pſal. 124. 1. & 4. *If it had not been the Lord who was on our ſide, then the waters had overwhelmed us: the ſtream had gone over our ſoul.* To ſee men that have ſpent ſo m any years upon the Seas, (where your lives have continually hanged in ſuſpenſe before you) attain to your years, when you could neither be reckon'd among the *living* nor the *dead* (as Seamen are not) Oh, what cauſe have you to adore your great preſerver! Many thouſands of your Companions are gone down, and you are yet here to praiſe the Lord among the Living. You have bordered nearer to Eternity all your dayes than others, and often been in eminent perils upon the Seas, ſurely ſuch, and ſo many Salvations call aloud upon you for moſt thankful acknowledgements.

* See my *Saman's Companion* P. 41.

(4.) To conclude, how innumerable hazards and accidents, (the leaſt of which hath cut off others) hath God carried us all through! I think I may ſafely ſay, your privative and poſitive mercies of this kind are more in number than the hairs of your heads. Many thouſands of theſe dangers we never ſaw, nor were made particularly ſenſible of; but though we ſaw them not, our God did, and brought us out of *danger*, before he brought us into *fear*. Some have been evident to us, and thoſe ſo remarkable, that we cannot think or ſpeak of them to his day, but our ſouls are freſhly affected with thoſe mercies.

It is recorded of our famous *Jewell*, that about the beginning of *Queen Mary*'s Reign, the Inquiſition taking hold of him in *Oxford*, he fled to *London* by night; but providentially loſing the *Road*, he eſcaped the *Inquiſitors* who purſued him: however, he fell that night

Clark's Lives. p. 262.

night into another eminent hazard of life, for wandering up and down in the ſnow, he fainted, and lay ſtarving in the way, panting and labouring for life; at which time Mr. *Latimer*'s ſervant found and ſaved him.

It were eaſie to multiply Examples in this kind, Hiſtories abounding with them; but I think there are few of us, but are furniſht out of our own experience abundantly; ſo that I ſhall rather chuſe to preſs home the ſenſe of theſe Providences upon you, in order to a ſuitable return to the God of your mercies for them, than add more Inſtances of this kind. To this purpoſe, I deſire you ſeriouſly to weigh the following particulars.

(1.) Conſider what you owe to Providence for your protection, by which your life hath been protracted unto this day, with the uſefulneſs and comfort thereof. Look abroad in the world, and you may daily ſee ſome in every place, who are Objects of pity, bereaved by ſad accidents of all the comforts of life, whilſt in the mean time Providence hath tenderly preſerved you, *keeping all your bones, ſo that not one of them is broken*, Pſal. 34. 20. Is not the Elegant and Comely Structure of thy Body ſpoiled, thy members diſtorted, or made ſo many ſeats of Torment, the uſefulneſs of any part deprived? why, this is becauſe Providence never quitted its hand of thee ſince thou cameſt out of the womb, but with a watchful eye and tender hand hath guarded thee in every place, and kept thee as its charge.

The learned *Alſted* ſets himſelf to enumerate the manifold hazards through which the life of man is carried in the hand of Providence, in *Theol. Catechet. p.* 191, 192, *&c.* and piouſly concludes in theſe words, *Denique, quod ab innumeris malis, quæ ab omnibus creaturis omni tempore tibi impendent, mirabiliter liberaris; in his omnibus inquam, quæ ſcimus crebro evenire ſolita, ac proinde ita ſe habent, ut nobis quoque poſſint evenire, ſolam Dei providentiam debes ſuſpicere & prædicare.*

(2.) Conſider, how every member which hath been ſo tenderly kept, hath nevertheleſs been an Inſtrument of ſin againſt the Lord; and that, not only in the dayes of your unregeneracy, when *ye yielded your members as Inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin*, (as the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks in Rom. 6. 13.) but even ſince you

gave

gave them up in Covenant unto the Lord, as dedicated Inſtruments to his ſervice: and yet how tender hath Providence been over them! You have often provoked him to afflict you in every part, and lay *penal* evil upon every member that hath been inſtrumental in *moral* evil; bnt O how great have his compaſſions been towards you, and his patience admirable!

(3.) Conſider, what is the aim of Providence in all the tender care it hath manifeſted for you; why doth it protect you ſo aſſiduouſly, and ſuffer no evil to befall you? Is it not that you ſhould imploy your bodies for God, and cheerfully apply your ſelves to that ſervice he hath called you to? Doubtleſs, this is the end and level of theſe mercies; for elſe to what purpoſe are they afforded you? Your bodies are a part of Chriſts purchaſe, as well as your ſouls, 1 Cor. 6. 19. They are committed to the charge and Tutelage of Angels, *Heb.* 1. 14. who have performed many ſervices for them. They are dedicated by your ſelves to the Lord, and that upon the higheſt account, *Rom.* 12. 1. They have already been the ſubjects of manifold mercies in this world; P*ſal.* 35. 10. and ſhall partake of ſingular glory and happineſs in the world to come, P*hil.* 3. 21. And ſhall they not then be employed, yea, cheerfully worn out in his ſervice? How reaſonable it is they ſhould be ſo? Why are they ſo tenderly preſerved by God, if they muſt not be uſed for God?

The Tenth Performance of Providence.

X.

YOu have heard many and great things performed for you by Divine Providence, in the former particulars; but there is an eminent favour it beſtows on the Saints, which hath not yet been conſidered, and indeed is too little minded by us, and that

Providential Aſſiſtances in the work of Mortification.

that is, *The Aid and assistance it gives the people of God in the great work of Mortification.*

Mortification of our sinful affections and passions, is the one half of our Sanctification, Rom. 6. 11. *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.*

It's the great Evidence of our Interest in Christ. See *Gal.* 5. 24. *Rom.* 6. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

It's our safety in the hour of Temptation. The corruptions in the world are through lust, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4.

Our Instrumental fitness for service, depends much upon it, 2 *Tim.* 2. 21. *John.* 15. 2. How great a service to our souls therefore must that be, by which this blessed work is carried on upon them?

Now there are two Means or Instruments imployed in this work. The *Spirit*, who effects it *internally*, *Rom.* 8. 13. And *Providence*, which assists it *externally*. The *Spirit* indeed is the principal Agent, upon whose operation, the success of this work depends; and all the Providences in the world can never effect it without him. But these are secondary and subordinate means, which by the blessing of the Spirit upon them, have a great stroke in the work. How they are so serviceable to this end and purpose, I shall open in the following account.

(1.) More generally. The most wise God orders the dispensations of Providence in a blessed subordination to the work of his Spirit. There is a sweet harmony betwixt them in their distinct workings. They all meet in that one blessed issue which God hath by the counsel of his Will directed them to, *Eph.* 1. 11. *Rom.* 8. 28. Hence it is, that the Spirit is said to be in, and order the motions of the wheels of Providence, *Ezek.* 1. 20. and so they move together by consent. Now, one great part of the Spirit's internal work, being to destroy sin in the people of God, see how conformable to his design external Providences are steer'd and order'd in the following particulars.

(1.) There is in all the regenerate a strong propension and inclination to sin, and in that lyes a principal part of the power of sin. Of this *Paul* sadly complains,

Rom.

Rom. 7. 23. *But I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, which is in my members:* and every believer daily finds it to his grief. O 't is hard, 'tis hard to forbear thoſe things that grieve God. God hath made an hedge about us, and fenced us againſt ſin by his Laws; but there is a proneneſs in nature to break over the hedge, and that againſt the very reluctations of the Spirit of God in us. Now, ſee in this caſe, the concurrence and aſſiſtance of Providence, for the prevention of ſin; look, as the Spirit internally reſiſts thoſe ſinful inclinations, ſo Providence externally layes barrs and blocks in our way to hinder and prevent ſin: and this is the meaning of thoſe places lately cited, *Hoſea* 2. 6. & 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. So *Job* 33. 17, 18, 19. There is many a bodily diſtemper inflicted on this very ſcore, to be a clog to prevent ſin: Oh bear them patiently upon this conſideration. *Baſil* was ſorely grieved with an inveterate head-ach, he earneſtly prayes, it might be removed; God removed it: but no ſooner was he freed of this clog, but he felt the inordinate motions of luſt; which made him pray for his head-ach again. So it might be with many of us, if our clogs were off.

A Queſtion may be moved here, *Whether it be the genius and property of a gracious ſpirit, to forbear ſin, becauſe of the rod of affliction?* They have ſurely higher motives and nobler principles than theſe. This is the temper of a carnal and ſlaviſh ſpirit. *Queſt.*

Indeed it is ſo, when this is the ſole or principal reſtraint from ſin: when a man abhorrs not ſin, becauſe of the intrinſick *filth*, but only becauſe of the troubleſome *conſequents* and *effects*. But this is vaſtly different from the caſe of the Saints under ſanctified afflictions; for as they have *higher* motives and *nobler* principles, ſo they have *lower* and more *ſenſible* ones too; and theſe are, in their kind and place, very uſeful to them. (2.) Beſides, you muſt know, that afflictions work in another way upon gracious hearts to reſtrain them from *Sol.*

from ſin, or warn them againſt ſin, than they do upon others. It is not ſo much the ſmart of the rod which they feel, as the tokens of Gods diſpleaſure, which affrights and ſcares them, Job 10. 17. *Thou reneweſt thy witneſſes againſt me*, &c. and this is that which principally affects them. See Pſal. 6. 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure*: and Jer. 10. 24. *O Lord, correct me but with judgment, not in thine anger, leſt thou bring me to nothing*: and ſurely this is no low and common argument.

(2.) Notwithſtanding this double fence of Gods command, and preventive afflictions, yet ſin it too hard for the beſt of men: their corruptions carry them through all to ſin. And when it is ſo, not only doth the *Spirit* work internally, but *Providence* alſo works externally in order to their *reduction*. The wayes of ſin are not only made bitter unto them, by the remorſe of Conſcience, but by thoſe afflictive rods upon the outward man, with which God alſo follows it; and in both theſe reſpects, I find that place expounded, Eccleſ. 10. 8. *Whoſo breaketh an hedge. a Serpent ſhall bite him.* If, as ſome expound it, the *hedge* be the *Law* of God, then the *Serpent* is the *remorſe* of Conſcience, and the ſharp teeth of *affliction*, which he ſhall quickly feel, if he be one that belongs to God.

The deſign and aim of theſe afflictive Providences, is to purge and cleanſe them from that pollution into which temptations have plunged them, Iſa. 27. 9. *By this ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin.* To the ſame purpoſe is that place, Pſal. 119. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word.* Theſe afflictions have the ſame uſe and end to our ſouls, that froſty weather hath upon thoſe clothes that are laid a bleaching; they alter the hue, and make it whiter, which ſeems to be the alluſion in thoſe words, Dan. 11. 35. *And ſome of them of underſtanding ſhall fall to try them, and to purge, and to make them white.*

And

And here it may be queried, *Upon what account afflictions are ſaid to purge away the iniquities of the Saints. Is it not unwarrantable, and very diſhonourable to Chriſt, to attribute that to affliction, which is the peculiar honour of his blood?* Queſt.

It is confeſſed, that the blood of Chriſt is the only *Lavatory*, or Fountain opened for ſin, and that no afflictions how many, or ſtrong, or continual ſoever they be, can in themſelves purge away the pollution of ſin, as we ſee in wicked men, who are afflicted and afflicted, and again afflicted; and yet, nevertheleſs ſinful: and the Torments of Hell, how extream, univerſal and continual ſoever they are, yet ſhall never fetch out the ſtain of one ſin. Sol.

But yet, this hinders not, but that a ſanctified affliction, may in the efficacy and vertue of *Chriſts* blood, produce ſuch bleſſed effects upon the ſoul. Though a *Croſs* without a *Chriſt*, never did any man good, yet thouſands have been beholden to the *Croſs*, as it hath wrought in the vertue of his death for their good. And this is the caſe of thoſe ſouls that this diſcourſe is concerned about.

(3.) We find the beſt hearts, if God beſtow any comfortable enjoyment upon them, too apt to be overheated in their affections towards it, and to be too much taken up with theſe outward comforts. This alſo ſhewerh the great power and ſtrength of corruption in the people of God, and muſt by ſome means or other be mortified in them.

This was the caſe of *Hezekiah*, his heart was too much affected with his treaſures; ſo that he could not hide a vain-glorious temper, as you find *Iſa.* 39. 2. and ſo good *David*, *Pſal.* 30. 7. he thought his Mountain, (*i. e.* his Kingdom, and the ſplendour and glory of his preſent ſtate) had ſtood ſo faſt, that it ſhould never be moved.

The ſame good man, how did he let out his heart and affections upon his beautiful Son *Abſalom*? as appears by the doleful lamentation he made at his death, prizing him above his own life,

life, which was a thousand times more worth than he.

So *Jonah*, when God raised up a *Gourd* for him to shelter him from the Sun, how excessively was he taken with it, and was exceedingly glad of it?

But will God suffer things to lye thus? Shall the Creature purloin, and draw away our affections from him? No, this is our corruption, and God will purge it. And to this end he sends forth Providence to smite those Creatures, on which our affections are either inordinately or excessively let out, or else to turn them into rods, and smite us by them.

Is *Hezekiah* too much puffed up with his full Exchequer? Why, those very *Babylonians* to whom he boasted of it, shall empty it, and make a prey of it. *Isa.* 39. 6.

Is *David* hugging himself in a fond conceit of the stability of his Earthly Splendor? Lo, how soon God beclouds all, *Psal.* 30. 7. Is *Absalom* doted on, and crept too far into his good Fathers heart? this shall be the Son of his sorrow, that shall seek after his Fathers life.

Is *Jonah* so transported with his Gourd? God will prepare a Worm to smite it, *Jonah* 4. 6, 7.

How many Husbands, Wives and Children hath Providence smitten upon this very account? It might have spared them longer, if they had been loved more regularly, and moderately. This hath blasted many an Estate, and hopeful project; and it is a merciful dispensation for our good.

(4.) The strength of our unmortified Corruption shews it self in our pride, and the swelling vanity of our hearts when we have a name and esteem among men; when we are applauded and honoured, when we are admired for any gift or excellency that is in us, this draws forth the pride of the heart, and shews the vanity that is in it. So you read, Prov. 27. 21. *As the fining pot for silver, and the fornace for gold, so is a man to his praise*: (*i. e.*) as the fornace will discover what dross is in the metal when it is melted, so will praise

praiſe and commendations diſcover what pride is in the heart of him that receives them. This made a good man ſay, *He that praiſes me, wounds me.* And which is more ſtrange. this corruption may be felt in the heart, even when the laſt breath is ready to expire. It was the ſaying of one of the *German Divines*, when thoſe about him recounted for his encouragement the many ſervices he had done for God, *auferte ignem* (ſaith he) *adhuc enim paleas habeo. Take away the fire, for there is ſtill the chaff of pride in me.* To crucifie this corruption Providence takes off the bridle of reſtraint from ungodly men, and ſometimes permits them to traduce the names of Gods ſervants as, *Shimei* did *David's*. Yea, they ſhall fall into diſeſteem among their friends, as *Paul* did among the *Corinthians*; and all this to keep down the ſwelling of their ſpirits at the ſenſe of thoſe excellencies that are in them: The deſign of theſe Providences being nothing elſe, but to *hide pride from man.* Yea, it deſerves a ſpecial remarque, that when ſome good men have been engaged in a publick and eminent work, and have therein, it may be, too much ſought their own applauſe, God hath withheld uſual aſſiſtance at ſuch times from them, and cauſed them to falter ſo in their work, that they have come off with ſhame and pity at ſuch times, how ready and preſential ſoever they have been at other times. It were eaſie to give divers remarkable examples to confirm this Obſervation. But I paſs on.

(5.) The corruption of rhe heart ſhews it ſelf, in raiſing up great expectations to our ſelves from the Creature, and projecting abundance of felicity and contentment from ſome promiſing and hopeful enjoyments we have in the world. This we find to have been the caſe of holy *Job* in the dayes of his proſperity, Job. 28. 19. *Then I ſaid, I ſhall dye in my neſt, I ſhall multiply my dayes as the ſand.* But how ſoon were all theſe expectations daſht by a gloomy Providence, that benighted him in the Noon-tide of his proſperity: and all this for his good, to take off his heart more fully

fully from creature expectations. We often find, the beſt men to over-reckon themſelves in worldly things, and over-act their confidences about them. They that have great and well grounded expectations from *Heaven*, may have too great and ungrounded expectations from the *Earth*. But when it is ſo, it's very uſual for Providence to undermine their Earthly hopes, and convince them by experience how vain they are. Thus *Haggai* 1. 9. the peoples hearts were intently ſet upon proſperous Providences, full Harveſts, and great Increaſe; whilſt in the mean while no regard was had to the Worſhip of God, and the things of his Houſe; therefore Providence blaſts their hopes, and brings them to little.

(6.) Corruption diſcovers it ſelf in dependance upon Creature comforts, and ſenſible props. Oh how apt are the beſt men, to lean upon theſe things, and ſtay themſelves upon them! Thus did *Iſrael* ſtay themſelves upon *Egypt*, as a feeble man would lean upon his ſtaff; but God ſuffered it both to fail them, and wound them, *Ezek.* 29. 6, 7, 8. So for ſingle perſons, how apt are they to depend upon their ſenſible ſupports? Thus we lean on our Relations, and the inward thoughts of our hearts are, that they ſhall be to us ſo many ſprings of comfort to refreſh us throughout our lives; but God will ſhew us by his Providence our miſtake and error in theſe things. Thus an Husband is ſmitten, to draw the ſoul of a Wife nearer to God in dependence upon him, 1 *Tim.* 5. 5. So for Children, we are apt to ſay of this or that *Child*, as *Lamech* of *Noah*; Gen. 5. 29. *This ſame ſhall comfort us*; but the wind paſſes over theſe flowers and they are withered, to teach us, that our happineſs is not bound up in theſe enjoyments. So for our *Eſtates*. when the world ſmiles upon us, and we have got a warm neſt, how do we propheſie of reſt and peace in thoſe acquiſitions, minding, with good *Baruch*, great things for our ſelves; but Providence by a particular, or general calamity over-turns our projects, as *Jer.* 45. 4. 5. and all this to reduce our hearts from the Creature, to God our only reſt.

(7.) Cor-

(7.) Corruption diſcovers its ſtrenth in good men, by their *adherence* to things below, and lothnes to go hence. This often proceeds from the engaging enjoyments and pleaſant fruitions we have here below. Providence mortifies this inclination in the Saints, (1.) By killing thoſe enſnaring comforts before-hand, making all or moſt of our pleaſant things to dye before us. (2.) By imbittering this world to us, by the troubles of it. (3.) By making life undeſirable, through the pains and infirmities we feel in the body, and ſo looſing our root, in order to our more eaſie fall by the fatal ſtroke.

And thus I have finiſhed the Second General Head; but before I paſs from this, I cannot but make a pauſe, and deſire you with me, to ſtand in an holy amazement, and wonder at the dealings of God with ſuch poor worms as we are! Surely God deals familiarly with men! his condeſcenſions to his own clay are aſtoniſhing! All that I ſhall note at preſent about it ſhall be under theſe three heads, wherein *I* find the matter of my preſent meditations ſummed up by the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 144. 3. *Lord what is man, that thou takeſt knowledge of him? or the ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?* And in this Scripture you have repreſented.

The immenſe and tranſcendent goodneſs of God, (1.)
who is infinitely above us and all our thoughts, Job 11. 7, 8, 9. *Canſt thou by ſearching, find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canſt thou do? deeper than Hell; what canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the* Earth, *and broader than the Sea.* 2 Chron. 2. 6. *The Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him.* Exod. 15. 11. *He is glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, doing wonders.* When the Scripture ſpeaks of him comparatively, ſee how it expreſſes his greatneſs, Iſa. 40. 15, 16, 17. *Behold the Nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance: behold he taketh up the Iſles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not ſufficient to burn, nor the Beaſts thereof ſuffi-*

ſufficient for a burnt-offering. All Nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him leſs than nothing and vanity. When the holieſt men have addreſt themſelves to him, ſee with what humility and deep adoration they have ſpoken of him and to him! Iſa 6. 5. *Wo is me for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the King the* Lord *of Hoſts.* Nay, what aſpects the very Angels of Heaven have of that glorious Majeſty, you may ſee, Ver. 2, 3. *Each one had ſix wings, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cryed unto another, and ſaid,* Holy, *holy, holy is the Lord of Hoſts; the whole Earth is full of his glory.*

(2.) The baſeneſs, vileneſs and utter unworthineſs of Man, yea, the holieſt and beſt of men before God, Pſal. 39. 5. *Verily every man, at his beſt eſtate, is altogether vanity. Every man,* take where you will, and every man *in his beſt eſtate,* or ſtanding in his freſheſt glory, is, not only *vanity,* but *altogether* vanity. *Col Adam col Hebel,* every man is every vanity. For do but conſider the beſt of men in their *Extraction,* in their *Conſtitution,* and in their outward *Condition.*

(1.) In their *Extraction,* Eph. 2. 3. *By nature Children of wrath even as others.* The blood that runs in our veins, is as much tainted as theirs in Hell.

(2.) Conſider them in their *Conſtitution* and natural temper, and it is no better, yea, in many a worſe temper than in Reprobates: and though grace depoſe ſin in them from the Throne; yet Oh what offenſive and God provoking corruptions daily break out of the beſt hearts!

(3.) Conſider them in their *outward Condition,* and they are inferiour (for the moſt part) to others, 1 *Cor.* 1. 26, 27, 28, *&c.* and *Matth.* 11. 25. *I thank thee O Father* (ſaith Chriſt) *that thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes.*

(3.) And now let us conſider and admire, that ever this great

great and bleſſed God ſhould be ſo much concerned as you have heard he is in all his Providences about ſuch vile deſpicable Worms as we are! He needs us not, but is perfectly bleſſed and happy in himſelf without us. We can add nothing to him, Job 22. 2. *Can a man be profitable to God?* No, the holieſt of men add nothing to him; yet, ſee how great account he makes of us. For,

(1.) Doth not his eternal electing love beſpeak the dear account he made of us, *Eph.* 1. 4, 5. How ancient, how free, and how aſtoniſhing is this act of grace! This is that deſign which all Providences are in perſuit of, and will not reſt till they have executed.

(2.) Doth not the gift of his *only Son* out of his boſome ſpeak this truth, That God makes great account of this vile thing Man? Never was man ſo magnified before. If *David* could ſay, Pſal. 8. 3. *When I conſider the Heavens the work of thy hands, the Moon and Stars which thou haſt ordained, Lord, what is man?* How much more may we ſay? when we conſider thy *Son*, that lay in thy boſome, his infinite excellency, and unſpeakable dearneſs to thee; Lord, what is man, that ſuch a *Chriſt* ſhould be delivered to death for him! for *him*, and not for fallen *Angels!* Heb. 2. 16. for *him* when in a ſtate of enmity with God! *Rom.* 5. 8.

(3.) Doth not the aſſiduity of his Providential care for us, ſpeak his eſteem of us? Iſa. 27. 3. *Leſt any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous,* Job 36. 7. no, not a moment all their dayes; for did he ſo, a thouſand miſchiefs in that moment would ruſh in upon him, and ruine him.

(4.) Doth not the tenderneſs of his Providence ſpeak his eſteem of us? Iſa. 66. 13. *as one whom his Mother comforteth, ſo will I comfort you.* He comforts his (*viz.* by refreſhing Providences) as an indulgent Mother her tender Child. So Iſa. 31. 5. *As birds flying, viz.* ro their neſts, when their young are in danger, *ſo he defends his.* No *ſtorge* tenderneſs in the Crea-

Creature can ſhadow forth the tender bowels of the Creator.

(5.) Doth not the variety of the fruits of his Providence ſpeak it? Lam. 3. 23. *Our mercies are new every morning.* See *Pſal.* 40. 5. It is a fountain from which do ſtream forth ſpiritual and temporal, ordinary and extraordinary, publick and perſonal mercies, mercies without number.

(6.) Doth not the miniſtration of *Angels* in the Providential Kingdom ſpeak it? Heb. 1. ult. *Are they not all miniſtring ſpirits ſent forth,* &c.

(7.) Preached *Novemb.* V. Doth not the Providence, which this day calls us to celebrate the memory of, beſpeak the great account God hath for his people? O if not ſo, why had we not been given up as a prey to their teeth! See *Pſal.* 124. If the Lord had not been on our ſide, then wicked men, there compar'd to fire, water, wild beaſts, had devoured us. O bleſſed be God for that teeming Providence that hath already brought forth more than ſeventy years liberty and peace to the Church of God. I ſhall move in behalf of this Providence, that you would do by it, as the Jews by their *Purim*. *Eſth.* 9. 27, 28. and the rather, becauſe we ſeem now to be as near danger by the ſame Enemy as ever ſince that time: and if ſuch a mercy as this be forgotten. God may ſay as Judges 10. 13. I *will deliver you no more.*

The Third General Head.

HAving proved the Concernments of the people of God to be conducted by the care of Providence, and given Inſtances in the ten laſt named Heads, what influence Providence hath upon thoſe Intereſts and concerns of theirs among the reſt; we come in the next place, to prove it to be the duty of the people of God, to reflect upon theſe performances of Providence for them, at all times; but eſpecially in times of ſtraits and troubles.

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This I will evidence to be your unqueſtionable duty, by the following particulars.

This is our duty, becauſe God hath expreſly commanded it, and called his people to make the moſt ſerious reflections, and animadverſions upon his works whether of mercy or judgement. So when that dreadfulleſt of all Judgements was executed upon his profeſſing people for their Apoſtaſie from God, and God had removed the Symbols of his preſence from among them, the reſt are bid to go, *(i. e.)* by their meditations, (to ſend at leaſt their thoughts) to *Shiloh*, and *ſee what God did to it*, Jer. 7. 12. So for mercies, God calls us to conſider and review them, Micah 6. 5. *Remember O my people from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the faithfulneſs of the Lord*: *q. d.* if you reflect not upon that ſignal Providence, my faithfulneſs will be covered, and your unfaithfulneſs diſcovered. So for Gods works of Providence about the Creatures, we are called to conſider them, that we may prop up our faith by thoſe conſiderations for our own ſupplies: *Matth.* 6. 28. conſider the Fowls and Lillies. (1.)

It's plain, that this is our duty, becauſe the neglect of it is every where in Scripture condemned as a ſin. To be of an heedleſs inobſervant temper is very diſpleaſing to God; and ſo much appears by that Scripture, Iſa. 26. 11. *Lord when thy hand is liſted up they will not ſee.* Nay, it is a ſin, which God threatens and denounces woe againſt in his Word, *Pſal.* 28. 4, 5. and *Iſa.* 5. 12, 13. Yea, God not only threatens, but finites men with viſible Judgements for this ſin, *Job* 34. 26, 27. (2.)

And for this end and purpoſe it is, that the Holy Ghoſt hath affixed thoſe notes of attention to the narratives of the works of Providence in *Scripture*: all which do invite and call men to a due and deep obſervation of them. So in that great and celebrated work of Providence, in delivering *Iſrael* out of *Egyptian* bondage, you find a note of *attention* twice affixed to it, *Exod.* 3. 2, 9. So when that daring (3.)

Enemy *Rabsheke* (that put *Hezekiah* and all the people into such a consternation) was defeated by Providence, there is a note of *attention* prefixt to that Providence, 2 King 19. 7. *Behold, I will send a blast upon him,* &c. So when God glorifies his wisdom and power, in delivering his people from their Enemies, and ensnaring them in the works of their own hands, a double note of *attention* is affixed to that double work of Providence, *Psal.* 9. 16. *higgajon selah.* So at the opening of every seal which contains a remarkable series or branch of Providence, how particularly is attention commanded to every one of them, Rev. 6. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. *Come and see, come and see.* All these are very useless and superfluous additions in Scripture, if no such duty lyes upon us. See *Psal.* 66. 5.

(4.) Without due observation of the work of Providence, no praise can be rendered to God for any of them. Praise and thanksgiving for mercies depend upon this act of observation of them, and cannot be performed without it. *Psalm* 107. is spent in narratives of Gods Providential care of men. To his people in straits, *Ver.* 4, 5, 6. To prisoners in their bonds, *Ver.* 10, 11, 12. To men that lye languishing upon beds of sickness, *Ver.* 17, 18, 19. To Seamen upon the stormy Ocean, *Ver.* 23, *&c.* To men in time of famine, *Ver.* 33. to *Ver.* 40. Yea his Providence is displayed in all those changes that fall out in the world, debasing the high, and exalting the low, *Ver.* 40, 41. and at every paragraph men are still called upon to praise God for each of these Providences: but *Ver. ult.* shews you what a necessary ingredient to that duty, observation is. *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.* So that of necessity, God must be defrauded of his praise, if this duty be neglected.

(5.) Without this, we lose the usefulness and benefit of all the works of God for us or others, which would be an unspeakable loss indeed to us. This is the food our faith lives upon in dayes of distress, Psal. 74.

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Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the Wilderness; (*i. e.*) food to their faith. From Providences past, Saints use to argue to fresh and new ones to come. So *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 37. *The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the Lyon, and out of the paw of the Bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.* So *Paul*, 2 Cor. 1. 10. *Who hath delivered, and in whom also we trust, that he will yet deliver.* If these be forgotten or not considered, the hands of faith hang down. See Matth. 16. 9. *How is it that ye do not remember, neither consider?* This is a *Topick* from which the Saints have used to draw their Arguments in prayer for new mercies. As *Moses*, Numb. 14. 19. when he prayes for continued or new pardons for the people, he argues from what was past, *As thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now.* So the Church, *Isa.* 51. 9, 10. argues for new Providences upon the same ground *Moses* pleaded for new pardons.

(6.) It is a vile slighting of God, not to observe what of himself he manifests in his Providences. For in all Providences, especially in some, he comes nigh to us. He doth so in his Judgements, Mal. 3. 5. *I will come nigh to you in judgement.* He comes nigh in mercies also, Psal. 145. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him*, &c. Yea, he is said to visit us by his Providence when he corrects, *Hosea* 9. 7. and when he saves and delivers, Psal. 106. 4. These visitations of God preserve our spirits, *Job* 10. 12. And it is a wonderful condescension in the great God to visit us so often, Job 7. 18. *every morning, and every moment.* But not to take notice of it, is a vile and bruitish contempt of God, *Isa.* 1. 3. *Zeph.* 3. 2. You would not do so by a man for whom you have any respect. It's the character of the wicked, not to regard Gods favours, *Isa.* 26. 10. or frowns, *Jer.* 5. 3.

(7.) In a word, men can never order their addresses to God in prayer, suitable to their conditions, without due *observation* of his Providences. Your prayers are

to be ſuitable to your conditions: ſometimes we are called to praiſe, ſometimes to humiliation. In the way of his Judgements you are to wait for him, *Iſa.* 26. 8. to prepare to meet him, *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. *Amos* 4. 12. Now your buſineſs is, to turn away his anger which you ſee approaching. And ſometimes you are called to praiſe him for mercies received, *Iſa.* 12. 1, 2. but then you muſt firſt obſerve them.

Thus you find the matter of *David*'s Pſalms ſtill varied, according to the Providences that befell him: but an inobſervant heedleſs ſpirit can never do it. And thus you have the grounds of the Duty briefly repreſented; we paſs on to

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The Fourth General Head.

LEt us next (according to our method propoſed) proceed to ſhew, in what manner we are to reflect upon the *performances of Providence* for us. And certainly, it is not every ſlight and tranſient glance. nor every cold, hiſtorical, unaffecting rehearſal, or recognition of his Providences towards you, that will paſs with God, for a diſcharge of this great duty. No, no, it is another manner of buſineſs than the moſt of men underſtand it to be. O that we were but acquainted with this heavenly ſpiritual exerciſe! how ſweet would it make our lives! how light would it make our burdens! Ah Sirs! you live eſtranged from the pleaſure of the Chriſtian life, while you live in the ignorance or neglect of this duty. Now to lead you up to this heavenly, ſweet and profitable exerciſe, I will beg your attention to the following Directions.

The Firſt Direction.

Labour to get as full and through recognitions of the Providences of God about you from firſt to laſt, as you are able. O fill your hearts with the thoughts of him and his wayes. If a ſingle act of Providence be ſo raviſhing and tranſporting, what would many ſuch be, if they were preſented together to the view of the ſoul? If one *Star* be ſo beautiful to behold, what is a *Conſtellation*? Let your reflections therefore upon the acts and workings of Providence for you, be full *extenſively* and *intenſively*.

(1.) Let them be as *extenſively* full as may be. Search backward into all the performances of Providence throughout your lives. So did *Aſaph* in Pſal. 77. 11,12. *I will remember the works of the Lord: ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old: I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.* He laboured to recover and revive the ancient Providences of God, mercies many years paſt, and ſuch a freſh ſweetneſs out of them by new reviews of them. Ah Sirs, let me tell you, there is not ſuch a pleaſant *Hiſtory* for you to read in all the world, as the *Hiſtory* of your own lives, if you would but ſit down, and record to your ſelves from the beginning hitherto, what God hath been to you, and done for you; what ſignal manifeſtations, and out-breakings of his mercy, faithfulneſs and love, there have been in all the conditions you have paſt through: if your hearts do not melt before you have gone half through that Hiſtory, they are hard hearts indeed. *My father, the guide of my youth.*

(2.) Let them be as *intenſively* full as may be. Let not your thoughts ſwim like *feathers* upon the ſurface of the waters, but ſink like *lead* to the bottom. *The works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein*, Pſal. 111. 2. Not that I think it feaſible to ſound the depth of Providence by our ſhort line, Pſal. 77. 19. *Thy way is in the ſea, and thy path*

in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known; but it's our duty to dive as far as we can; and to admire the depth, when we cannot touch the bottom. It is in our viewing Providences, as it was with *Elijah*'s servant, when he looked out for rain, 1 *Kings* 18. 44. he went out once and viewed the Heavens, and saw nothing; bnt the *Prophet* bids him go again and again, and look upou the face of Heaven seven times; and when he had done so, what now, saith the *Prophet*? O now, saith he, *I see a cloud rising like a mans hand*; and then, keeping his eye upon it intent, he sees the whole face of Heaven covered with clouds. So you may look upon some Providences once and again, and see little or nothing in them, but look *seven times*, (*i. e.*) *meditate often* upon it, and you shall see its increasing glory, like that increasing cloud.

There are divers things to be distinctly pondered. and valued in one single Providence, before you can judge the amount and worth of it: as (1.) The *seasonableness* of mercy may give it a very great value. When it shall be timed so opportunely, and fall out in such a nick, as may make it a thousand fold more considerable to you than the same mercy would have been at another time. Thus when our wants are suffered to grow to an extremity, and all visible hopes fail, then to have relief given in, wonderfully enhances the price of such a mercy, Isa. 41. 17, 18.

(2.) The *peculiar care* and kindness of Providence to us, is a consideration which exceedingly heightens the mercy in it self, and endears it to us. So, when in general calamities upon the world, we are exempted by the favour of Providence, covered under its wings; when God shall call to us in evil dayes, *Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers*, as it is in Isa. 26. 20, 21. When such *Promises* shall be fulfilled to us in times of want and famine, as *Psal.* 33. 18, 19. When others are abandoned and exposed to misery, who have every way as much, it may be much more visible security against it; and yet they delivered up, and

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we ſaved: Oh, how endearing are ſuch Providences! *Pſal.* 91. 7, 8.

(3.) The *Introductiveneſs* of a Providence, is of ſpecial regard and conſideration, and by no means to be neglected by us. There are leading Providences, which how ſlight and trivial ſoever they may ſeem in themſelves, yet in this reſpect juſtly challenge the firſt rank among Providential favours to us; becauſe they uſher in a multitude of other mercies, and draw a bleſſed train of happy conſequences after them. Such a Providence was that of *Jeſſe*'s ſending *David* with proviſions to his Brethren that lay encamped in the Army, 1 *Sam.* 17. 17. And thus every Chriſtian may furniſh himſelf out of his own ſtock of Experience, if he will but reflect, and conſider, the Place where he is, the Relations that he hath, and the Way by which he was led into them.

(4.) The *Inſtruments* imployed by Providence for you, are of ſpecial conſideration. And the finger of God is clearly ſeen by us when we purſue that meditation. For,

Sometimes great mercies ſhall be conveyed to us by very improbable means, and more probable ones laid aſide. A *ſtranger* ſhall be ſtirred up to do that for you, which your near relations in nature had no power or will to do for you. *Jonathan*, a meer ſtranger to *David*, clave cloſer to him, and was more friendly and uſeful to him, than this own Brethren, who deſpiſed and ſlighted him. Miniſters have found more kindneſs and reſpect from ſtrangers, than their own people that are more obliged to them, Mark 6. 4. *A Prophet* (ſaith Chriſt) *is not without honour, ſave in his own Country, and among his own Kin, and in his own Houſe.*

Sometimes by the hands of *Enemies*, as well as Strangers, Rev. 12. 16. *The Earth helped the Woman.* God hath bowed the hearts of many wicked men, to ſhew great kindneſs to his people, *Acts* 28. 2.

Sometimes God makes uſe of Inſtruments for good

to his people, who deſigned nothing but evil and miſchief to them. Thus *Joſeph's* Brethren were inſtrumental to his advancement, in *that very thing*, wherein they deſigned his *ruine*, *Gen.* 50. 20.

(5.) The *deſign* and *ſcope* of Providence muſt not eſcape our through conſideration, what the aim and level of Providence is. And truly this, of all others, is the moſt warming and melting conſideration. You have the general account of the aim of all Providences, in Rom. 8. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.* A thouſand friendly hands are at work for them, to promote and bring about their happineſs. O, this is enough to ſweeten the bittereſt Providence to us, that we know it ſhall turn to our ſalvation, *Phil.* 1. 19.--

(6.) The *reſpect* and *relation* Providence bears to our *prayers*, is of ſingular conſideration; and a moſt taking and ſweet meditation. *Prayer* honours Providence, and Providence honours Prayer. Great notice is taken of this in Scripture, *Gen.* 24. 45. *Dan.* 9. 20. *Acts* 12. 12. You have had the *very Petitions* you *asked* of him. Providences have born the very ſignatures of your Prayers upon them. O how affectingly ſweet are ſuch mercies!

The Second Direction.

IN all your Obſervations of Providence, have a ſpecial reſpect to that Word of God, which is fulfilled and made good to you thereby.

This is a clear truth, that all Providences have relation to the written Word. Thus *Solomon* in his Prayer, acknowledges that the Promiſes and Providences of God went along ſtep by ſtep with his Father *David* all his dayes; and that his hand (put there for his Providence) had fulfilled whatever his mouth had ſpoken, 1 *Kings* 8. 24. So *Joſhuah* in like manner acknowledges, that *not one good thing had failed, of all the good things which the Lord had ſpoken*, Joſ. 23. 14.

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He had carefully obſerved what relation the *works* of God had to his *Word*. He compared them together, and found an exact harmony. And ſo may you too, if you will compare them as he did.

This I ſhall the more inſiſt upon, becauſe it is by ſome *Interpreters* ſuppoſed to be the very Scope of the Text. For (as was noted in the Explication) they ſupply and fill the ſenſe with *quæ promiſit*, the things which he hath promiſed; and ſo read the Text thus, *I will cry unto God moſt high, to God who performeth* the things he hath promiſed, *for me.*

Now though I ſee no reaſon to limit the ſenſe ſo narrowly, yet it cannot be denyed, but this is an eſpecial part of its intendment. Let us therefore in all our reviews of Providence, conſider, what word of God, whether it be of threatning, caution, counſel, or promiſe is at any time made good to us by his Providences. And hereby a twofold excellent advantage will reſult to us.

(1.) This will greatly confirm to us the truth of the Scripture, when we ſhall ſee its truth ſo manifeſt in the events. Certainly had *Scripture* no other ſeal or atteſtation, this alone would be an unanſwerable Argument of its divinity. When men ſhall find in all ages the works of God wrought ſo exactly according to this model, that we may ſay, As we have read or heard, ſo have we ſeen. O how great a confirmation is here before our eyes!

(2.) This will abundantly direct and inſtruct us in our preſent duties under all Providences We ſhall know hereby what we have to do, and how to carry our ſelves under all changes of conditions. You learn the voice and errand of the *rod* only from the Word, *Pſal.* 94. 12. The Word interprets the works of God. Providences in themſelves, are not a perfect guide. They often puzzle and entangle our thoughts; but bring them to the Word, and your duty will be quickly manifeſted, as Pſal. 73. 16, 17. *Vntil I went into the Sanctuary, then I underſtood their end*: and, not only their *end*; but his own *duty*,

to be quiet in an afflicted condition; and not envy their prosperity.

Well then, bring those Providences you have past through, or are now under, to the Word; and you will find your selves surrounded with a marvellous light; and see the verification of the Scriptures in them. I shall therefore here appeal to your consciences, whether you have not found these Events of Providence falling out agreeably in all respects with the Word.

(1.) The Word tells you, that it is your Wisdom and Interest, to keep close to its rules, and the duties it prescribes, that the way of holiness and obedience, is the wisest way, Deut. 4. 5, 6. *This is your wisdom.*

Now; let the events of Providence speak, whether this be true or nor. Certainly it will appear to be so, whether we respect our *present comfort*, or *future happiness*, both which we may see daily exposed by departue from duty, and secured by keeping close to it. Let the question be asked of the *Drunkard*, *Adulterer*, or prophane *Swearer*, when by sin they have ruined body, soul, estate and name, whether it be their wisdom to walk in those forbidden paths after their own lusts? Whether they had not better consulted their own interest and comfort, in keeping within the bounds and limits of Gods commands? and they cannot but confess, that *this their way is their folly. What fruit* (saith the Apostle) *had ye in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death*, Rom. 6. 21. Doth not the Providence of God verifie upon them those threatnings that are written, in the experience of all ages? *Prov.* 23. 29. *Prov.* 23. 21. *Prov.* 5. 9. *Job* 31. 12. *Prov.* 5. 10. all which woes and miseries they escape, that walk in Gods Statutes. Look upon the ruined estates and bodies you may every where see, and behold the truth of the Scriptures evidently made good in those sad Providences.

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The Word tells you, that your departure from the way of integrity and ſimplicity, to make uſe of ſinful policies, ſhall never profit you, 1 *Sam.* 12. 21. *Prov.* 3. 5. (2.)

Let the Events of Providence ſpeak to this alſo; ask your own experience, and you ſhall have a full confirmation of this truth. Did you ever leave the way of ſimplicity and integrity, and uſe ſinful ſhifts, to bring about your own deſigns, and proſper in that way? Certainly God hath curſed all the wayes of ſin; and whoever finds them to thrive with them, his people ſhall not. *Iſrael* would not rely upon the Lord, but truſt in the ſhadow of *Egypt*; and what advantage had they by this ſinful policy? See *Iſa.* 30. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *David* uſed a great deal of ſinful policy to cover his wicked fact; but did it proſper? See 2 *Sam.* 12. 12. It is an excellent note of *Livy*, *Conſilia callida, primâ ſpecie læta, tractata dura, eventu triſtia.* Sinful policies in their firſt appearances, are pleaſant and promiſing, in their management difficult, in their event ſad. Some by ſinful wayes have gotten wealth; but that Scripture hath been verified in their experience, Prov. 10 2. *Treaſures of wickedneſs profit nothing.* Either God hath blown upon it by a ſecret curſe, that it hath done them no good, or given them ſuch diſquietneſs in their conſciences, that they have been forced to vomit it up, e're they could find peace, *Job* 11. 13, 14, 15.

That which *David* gave in charge to *Solomon*, hath been found experimentally true by thouſands, 1 *Chron.* 22. 12, 13. That the true way to proſperity, is to keep cloſe to the rule of the Word. And that the true reaſon why men cannot proſper, is their forſaking that rule, 2 *Chron.* 24. 20.

It's true, if God have a purpoſe to deſtroy a man, he may for a time ſuffer him to ſucced and proſper in his ſin, for his greater hardening, *Job* 12. 6. But it is not ſo with thoſe whom the Lord loves; their ſinful ſhifts ſhall never thrive with them.

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(3.) The World prohibits your *truſt* and *confidence* in the *Creature*, even the greateſt and moſt powerful among Creatures, P*ſal.* 146. 3. It tells us, that 'tis better to truſt in the Lord, than in them, Pſal. 118. 8. It forbids our confidence in thoſe Creatures that are moſt nearly ally'd, aud related in the bonds of nature to us, *Micah* 7. 5. It curſeth the man that gives that relyance to the Creature, which is due to God, *Jer.* 17. 5.

Conſult the Events of Providence in this caſe, and ſee, whether the Word be not verified therein? Did you ever lean upon an *Egyptian* reed, and it did not break under you, and pierce as well as deceive you? O how often hath this been evident in our experience! Whatſoever we have over-loved, idolized, and leaned upon, God hath from time to time broken it, and made us to ſee the vanity of it; ſo that we find, the readieſt courſe to be rid of our comforts: is to ſet our hearts inordinately or immoderately upon them: for our God is a jealous God, and will not part with his glory to another. The World is full of examples of perſons deprived of their comforts, Husband, Wives, Children, Eſtates, *&c.* upon this account, and by this means. If *Jonah* be over-joyed in his Gourd, a *Worm* is preſently prepared to ſmite it. Hence it is, that ſo many graves are opened for the burying of our *Idols* out of our ſight. If *David* ſay, *My mountain ſhall ſtand ſtrong, I ſhall not be moved*; the next news he ſhall hear, is of darkneſs and trouble, Pſal. 30. 6, 7. O how true and faithful do we find theſe ſayings of God to be! Who cannot put to his ſeal, and ſay, *Thy words are truth*?

(4.) The Word aſſures us, that ſin is the Caſe and Inlet of Affliction and Sorrow, and that there is an inſeparable connection betwixt them, Numb. 32. 23. *Be ſure your ſin will find you out:* (*i. e.*) the ſad effects and afflictions that follow it ſhall find you out. So Pſal. 89. 30, 31, 32. *If his ſons forſake my Law, I will viſit their iniquities with rods.*

Enquire now at the mouth of Providence, whether this

this be indeed ſo, according to the reports of the Word. Ask but your own Experiences, and you ſhall find, that juſt ſo Providence hath ordered it all along your way. When did you grow into a ſecure, vain, carnal frame, but you found ſome rouzing, ſtartling Providence ſent to awaken you? When did you wound your Conſciences with guilt, and God did not wound you for it, in ſome one or other of your beloved enjoyments? Nay, ſo ordinary is this with God, that from the obſervations of their own frames and wayes, many Chriſtians have fore-boded and preſaged troubles at hand.

I do not ſay, that God never afflicts his people, but for their ſin; for he may do it for their tryal, 1 Pet. 4. 12. Nor do I ſay, that God follows every ſin with a rod; for who then ſhould ſtand before him? *Pſal.* 130. 3. But this I ſay, that it's Gods uſual way, to viſit the ſins of his people with rods of affliction, and this in mercy to their ſouls. Upon this account it was, that the rod of God was upon *David* in a long ſucceſſion of troubles upon his Kingdom and family, after that great prevarication of his, 2 *Sam.* 12. 10. And if we would carefully ſearch out the ſeeds and principles of thoſe miſeries under which we or ours do groan; we ſhould find them to be our own turnings aſide from the Lord, according to that *Jer.* 2. 19. and *Jer.* 4. 18. Have not all theſe cautions, and threatnings of the Word been exactly fulfilled by Providence in your own experience? Who can but ſee the infallible truth of God in all that he hath threatned! And no leſs evident is the truth of the Promiſes to all that will obſerve how Providence makes them good every day to us; for conſider,

(5.) How great ſecurity God hath given to his people in the Promiſes, that no man ſhall loſe any thing by ſelf-denyal for his ſake. He hath told us, Mark 10. 29, 30. *Verily, I ſay unto you, there is no man that hath left Houſe. or Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my ſake and the Goſpels; but he ſhall receive an hundred fold now in this*

this time, houſes, and Brethren and Siſters, and Mothers, and Children, and Lands with perſecutions, and in the world to come Eternal life.

Though that vile Apoſtate *Julian* derided this Promiſe, yet thouſands and ten thouſands have experienced it, and do at this day ſtand ready to ſet their ſeal to it. God hath made it good to his people, not only in *ſpirituals*; inward joy, and peace; but even in *Temporals* alſo: inſtead of natural relations who took care for them before, hundreds of *Chriſtians* ſhall ſtand ready to aſſiſt and help them: So that though they have left all for *Chriſt*, yet they may ſay with the *Apoſtle*, 2 Cor. 6. 10. *As having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things.* O the admirable care and tenderneſs of Providence over thoſe that for Conſcience ſake have left all, and caſt themſelves upon its immediate care! Are there not at this day to be found many ſo provided for, even to the envy of their Enemies, and their own admiration? Who ſees not the faithfulneſs of God in the Promiſes, that hath but an heart to truſt God in them!

(6.) The Word of Promiſe aſſures us, that whatever wants or ſtraits the Saints fall into, their God *will never leave them, nor forſake them*, Hebr. 13. 5. that he *will be with them in trouble*, Pſal. 91. 15.

Summa hæc eſt, cum omnia bona ſuppeditentur à deo in omnibus vitæ humanæ ordinibus noſtri officii erit, in calamitatibus nos erigere conſideratione providentiæ divinæ. Alſted. Theol. Catecher. p. 192.

Conſult the various Providences of your life in this point, and I doubt not, but you will find the truth of theſe Promiſes as often confirmed, as you have been in trouble. Ask your own hearts, where, or when was it that your God forſook you, and left you to ſink and periſh under your burdens? I doubt not, but moſt of you have been at one time or other plunged in difficulties, difficulties out of which you could ſee no way of eſcape by the eye of reaſon; yea, ſuch, as it may be, ſtaggered your faith in the Promiſe, as *David*'s was, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1. when he ſaid, *I ſhall one day periſh by the hand of Saul. All men are Lyars*, (even *Samuel* himſelf) and yet notwithſtanding all, we ſee him emerge out of that Sea of trouble, and the Promiſes made good in every tittle to him. The like doubtleſs

leſs you may obſerve, in your own caſes. Ask your own ſouls the queſtion, and they will ſatisfie it. Did God abandon and caſt you off in the day of your ſtraits? certainly you muſt belye your own experience, if you ſhould ſay ſo, 'Tis true, there have been ſome plunges and difficulties you have met with, wherein (1.) You could ſee no way of eſcape, but concluded you muſt periſh in them. (2.) Difficulties that have ſtaggered your faith in the Promiſes, and made you doubt, whether the fountain of All-ſufficiency would let out it ſelf for your relief. (3.) Yea, ſuch difficulties as have provoked you to murmuring and impatience, and thereby provoked the Lord to forſake you in your ſtraits; but yet you ſee he did not. He hath either (1.) Strengthened your back to bear, or (2.) Lightened your burden, or (3.) Opened an unexpected door of eſcape, according to that Promiſe, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. ſo that the evil which you feared, came not upon you.

You read, that the Word of God is the only ſupport and relief to a gracious ſoul in the dark day of Affliction, *Pſal.* 119. 50, 92. ---------- 2 *Sam.* 23. 5. That for this very purpoſe it was written, *Rom.* 15. 4. No rules of moral Prudence, no ſenſual remedies can perform that for us, which the Word can do. (7.)

And is not this a ſealed Truth, atteſted by a thouſand of undenyable experiences? Hence have the Saints fetcht their *Cordials*, when fainting under the rod. One Word of God can do more, than ten thouſand words of men to relieve a diſtreſſed ſoul. If Providence have at any time directed you to ſuch Promiſes, as either aſſure you that the Lord will be with you in trouble, *Pſal.* 91. 15. or that encourage you from inward peace, to bear cheerfully outward burdens, *John* 16. 33. or ſatisfie you of Gods tenderneſs and moderation in his dealings with you, *Iſa.* 27. 8. or that you ſhall reap bleſſed fruits from them, *Rom.* 8. 28. or that clear up your intereſt in God, and his love under your afflictions, 2 *Sam.* 7. 14. Oh, what ſenſible eaſe and relief enſues! how light is your burden, compared with what it was before!

The

(8.) The Word tells us, that there is no ſuch way to improve our Eſtates, as to lay them out with a cheerful liberality for God; and that our withholding our hands, when God and duty calls to diſtribute, will not be for our advantage. See *Prov.* 11. 25. *Iſa.* 32. 8. *Prov.* 19. 17. *Prov.* 11. 24.

Conſult Providence now, and you ſhall find it in all reſpects according to the report of the Word. O how true is the Scripture teſtimony herein! There are many thouſand Witneſſes now living, that can ſet their ſeals to both parts of this propoſition. What men ſave (as they count ſaving) with one hand, Providence ſcatters by another hand: and what they ſcatter abroad with a liberal hand and ſingle eye for God, is ſurely repay'd to them or theirs. Never did any man loſe by diſtributing for God. He that lends to the poor *fœneratur Domino*, as ſome expound that Text, puts his money to intereſt to the Lord. Some have obſerved how Providence hath doubled all they have laid out for God, in wayes unexpected to them.

(9.) The Word aſſures us, that the beſt expedient for a man to ſettle his own intereſt in the conſciences and affections of men, is to direct his wayes, ſo as to pleaſe the Lord, *Prov.* 16. 7. and doth not Providence confirm it? This the three Jews found by experience, *Dan.* 3. 28, 29. and ſo did *Daniel*, *chap.* 6. *v.* 20, 21, 22. This kept up *John*'s reputation in the conſcience of *Herod*, *Mark* 6. 20. So it fell out, when *Conſtantius* made that exploratory decree; thoſe that were conſcientious were preferred, and thoſe that changed their religion, expelled. Never did any man loſe at laſt by his fidelity.

(10.) The written Word tells us, that the beſt expedient to inward peace and tranquillity of mind under puzzling and diſtracting troubles, is to commit our ſelves and out caſe to the Lord; ſo you read, *Pſal* 37. 5, 6. 7 and *Prov.* 16. 3.

And as you have read in the Word, ſo you have found it in your own Experience. Oh, what a burden

is

is off your ſhoulders, when you have reſigned the caſe to God! Then doth Providence iſſue your affairs comfortably for you. The difficulty is ſoon over, when the heart is brought to this.

Thus you ſee, how Scriptures are fulfilled by Providence in theſe few Inſtances I have given of it. Compare them in all other caſes, and you ſhall find the ſame: for all the lines of Providence lead from the Scripture, and return thither again, and do moſt viſibly begin and end there.

The Fourth Direction.

IN *all your reviews and obſervations of Providence, be ſure that you eye God as the Author or orderer of them all*, Prov. 3. 6. (1.)

In all the *comfortable* Providences of your lives, eye God as the *Author* or donor of them. Remember he is *the father of mercies*, that begets every mercy for you, 2 Cor. 1. 3. *The God of all comfort*, without whoſe order no mercy or comfort can come to your hands. And think it not enough thus to acknowledge him in a general way; but when you receive mercies, take ſpecial notice of the following particulars.

(1.) Eye the Care of God for you, 1 Pet. 5. 7. *He careth for you. Your Father knows you have need of theſe things*, Matth. 6. 32. It is but to acquaint him what you want, and your wants are ſupplyed, *Phil.* 4. 6. *me, merimnate*, torture not your ſelves about it: you have a Father that cares for you.

(2.) Eye the Wiſdom of God, in the way of diſpenſing his mercies to you, how *ſuitably* they are ordered to your condition, and how ſeaſonably. When one comfort is cut off and removed, another is raiſed up in its room. Thus *Iſaac* was comforted in *Rebecka* after his *Mothers* death, Gen. 24. 67.

(3.) Eye the free Grace of God in them, yea, ſee riches of Grace in every bequeſt of comfort to ſo vile and unworthy creatures as you are. See your

your ſelves over-topt by the leaſt of all your mercies, Gen. 32. 10. I *am not worthy of the leaſt*, ſaid *Jacob*.

(4.) Eye the Condeſcenſion of God, to your requeſts for thoſe mercies, *Pſal.* 34. 6. This is the ſweeteſt bit in any enjoyment, in which a man can ſenſibly reliſh the return and anſwer of his Prayers, and greatly inflames the ſouls love to God, *Pſal.* 116. 1.

(5.) Eye the Deſign and end of God in all your comforts. Know that it is not ſent to ſatisfie the cravings of your ſenſual appetite, but to quicken and enable you for a more cheerful diſcharge of your duty, *Deut.* 28. 47.

(6.) Eye the Way and Method in which your mercies are conveyed to you. They all flow to you through the blood of *Chriſt* and *Covenant* of grace, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22, 23. Mercies derive their ſweetneſs from the Channel through which they run to us.

(7.) Eye the Diſtinguiſhing goodneſs of God, in all the comfortable enjoyments of your lives. How many thouſand better than you, are denyed thoſe Comforts? See *Heb.* 11. 37.

(8.) Eye them all as comforts appointed to refreſh you in your way to far better and greater mercies than themſelves. The beſt mercies are ſtill reſerved till laſt, and all theſe are introductive to better.

(2.) In all the Sad and afflictive Providences that befall you, Eye God as the Author and orderer of them alſo. So he repreſents himſelf to us, Jer. 18. 11. *Behold*, I *create evil, and deviſe a device againſt you.* And Amos 3. 6. *Is there evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it*? More particularly,

(1.) Set before you the *Soveraignty* of God. Eye him as a Being infinitely ſuperiour to you, at whoſe pleaſure, you, and all you have, is *Pſal.* 115. 3. which is the moſt concluſive reaſon and argument of ſubmiſſion, *Pſal.* 46. 10. For if we, and all we have proceeded from his Will, how equal is it, that we be reſigned

reſigned up to it? It is not many years agone ſince we were not, and when it pleaſed him to bring us upon the Stage of action, we had no liberty of indenting with him, on what terms we would come into the world; or refuſe to be, except we might have our being on ſuch terms as we deſired. His Soveraignty is gloriouſly diſplayed in his *Eternal Decrees and temporal Providences.* He might have put you into what rank of Creatures he pleaſed. He might have made you the moſt deſpicable Creatures, *Worms* or *Toads*: or, if men, the moſt vile, abject and miſerable among men: and when you had run through all the miſeries of this life, have damned you to Eternity, made you miſerable for ever, and all this without any wrong to you. And ſhall not this quiet us under the common afflictions of this life?

Set the *Grace* and *Goodneſs* of God before you in all afflictive Providences. O ſee him paſſing by you in the cloudy and day, proclaiming his Name, *the Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious.* There are two ſorts of mercies that are ſeldom eclipſed by the darkeſt affliction that befalls the Saints in their temporal concerns, *ſc. ſparing mercy* in this world, and *ſaving mercy* in that to come. It is not ſo bad now as it might, and we deſerved it ſhould be, and it will be better hereafter. This the Church obſerved, and reaſoned her ſelf quiet from it, *Lam.* 3. 22. Hath he taken ſome? he might have taken all. Are we afflicted? it's mercy we are not deſtroyed. Oh if we conſider what temporal mercies are yet ſpared, and what ſpiritual mercies are beſtowed, and yet continued to us, we ſhall find cauſe to admire mercy, rather than complain of ſeverity. (2.)

Eye the Wiſdom of God in all your afflictions, behold it in the choice of the *kind* of your affliction, this, and not another: the *Time*, now and not at another ſeaſon: the *Degree*, in this meaſure only, and not in a greater: the *Supports* afforded you under it, not left altogether helpleſs: the *Iſſue* to which it's over-ruled, it's made to your good, not ruine. Look upon all theſe, (3.)

and

and then ask thy heart that queſtion God askt *Jonah*, *Doſt thou well to be angry*? Surely, when you conſider all, what need you had of theſe rods, that your corruptions will require all this, it may be much more to mortifie them; that without the periſhing of theſe things, you might have periſhed for ever; you will ſee great reaſons to be quiet and well ſatisfied under the hand of God.

(4.) Set the *faithfulneſs* of the Lord before you under the ſaddeſt Providences. So did *David*, *Pſal.* 119. 75. This is according to his Covenant faithfulneſs, *Pſal.* 89. 22. Hence it is, that the Lord will not withhold a rod when need requires it, 1 *Pet.* 1. 6. Nor will he forſake his people under the rod, when he inflicts it, 2 *Cor.* 4. 9.

Oh what quietneſs will this breed! I ſee my God will not loſe my heart, if a rod can prevent it; he had rather hear me groan here, than howl hereafter: his love is judicious, not fond: he conſults my *good*, rather than my *eaſe*.

(5.) Eye the *All-ſufficiency* of God in the day of affliction. See enough in him ſtill, whatever be gone. Here is the *fountain* ſtill as full as ever, though this or that *pipe* be cut off, which was wont to convey ſomewhat of it to me. O Chriſtians, can't you make up any loſs this way? Can't you ſee more in God, than in any or all the Creature comforts you have loſt? With what eyes then do you look upon God?

(6.) Laſtly, Eye the *Immutability* of God. Look on him as the Rock of Ages, James 1. 17. *The Father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs, nor ſhadow of turning.* Eye *Jeſus Chriſt*, as *the ſame yeſterday, to day and for ever.* Oh how quietly will you then behave your ſelves under the changes of Providence? It may be, two or three dayes have made a ſad change in your condition: the death of a dear relation hath turned all things upſide down: that place is empty where lately they were, as it is, Job 7. 10. *His place ſhall know him no more:* Well, but God is what he was, and where he was: Time ſhall make no change upon him,

as

as it is in Iſa. 40. 6, 7, 8. *The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord abideth for ever.* O how compoſing are thoſe views of God to our ſpirits under dark Providences!

The Fifth Direction.

LAſtly, *Work up your hearts to thoſe frames, and exerciſe thoſe affections which the ſeveral Providences of God that are verſant about you call for*, Eccleſ. 7. 14. Suit your ſelves to anſwer the deſign and end of God in all Providences. As there are various affections planted in your ſouls, ſo are there ſeveral graces planted in thoſe affections, and ſeveral Providences appointed to draw forth, and exerciſe theſe graces.

When the Providences of God are ſad, and afflictive either upon the *Church* in general, or your families and perſons in particular; *then it is ſeaſonable for you to exerciſe godly ſorrow and humility of ſpirit*: for in that day, and by thoſe Providences God doth call to it, *Iſa.* 22. 12. *Micah* 6. 9. Now, ſenſitive pleaſure and natural joy, is out of ſeaſon, Ezek. 21. 10. *Should we then make mirth?* If there be either. (1.) A filial ſpirit in us, we cannot be light and vain, when our *Father* is angry; or (2.) If any real ſenſe of the evil of ſin which provokes Gods anger, we muſt be heavy hearted when God is ſmiting for it; or (3.) If any ſenſe and compaſſion for the miſeries that ſin brings upon the world, it will make us to ſay with *David*, Pſal. 119. 158. *I beheld the tranſgreſſors and was grieved.* 'Tis ſad to conſider the miſeries that they pull down upon themſelves in this world and that to come. (4.) If there be any care in us to prevent utter ruine, and ſtop God in the way of his anger, we know this is the means to do it, *Amos* 4. 12. (1.)

(2.) *How ſad and diſmal ſoever the face of Providence be, yet ſtill maintain ſpiritual joy and comfort in God under all. Though there be no herd in the ſtall* (ſaid *Habakkuck*, chap. 3. 16, 17.) *yet will I rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation.*

There are two ſorts of Comforts, *Natural* and *Senſitive*, *Divine* and *Spiritual*. There is a time when it becomes *Chriſtians* to exerciſe both; ſo *Heſt.* 9. 22. And there is a time when the former is to be ſuſpended and laid by, *Pſal.* 137. 2. But there is no ſeaſon, wherein ſpiritual joy and comfort in God is unſeaſonable, as appears by thoſe Scriptures, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 16. *Phil.* 4. 4. This ſpiritual joy or comfort, is nothing elſe but the cheerineſs of our heart in God, and the ſence of our intereſt in him, and in his Promiſes. And it's ſure, that no Providence can render this unſeaſonable to a Chriſtian. Let us ſuppoſe the moſt afflicted and calamitous ſtate a Chriſtian can be incident to, yet,

(1) Why ſhould ſad Providences make him lay by his comforts in God? when as thoſe are but for a moment, but theſe eternal, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17.

(2.) Why ſhould we lay by our joy in God, upon the account of ſad Providences without, when at the very worſt and loweſt ebb, the Saints have infinitely more cauſe to rejoyce, than to be caſt down? There's more in one of their mercies to comfort them, than in all their troubles to deject them. All your loſſes are but as the loſs of a *farthing* to a *Prince*, *Rom.* 8. 18.

(3.) Why ſhould they be ſad, as long as their God is with them in all their troubles? As *Chriſt* ſaid, Matth. 9. 15. *Can the Children of the Bridegoom be ſad, whileſt the Bridegroom is with them*? So ſay I, Can the ſoul be ſad, whileſt God is with it? Oh methinks, that one Promiſe, Pſal. 91. 15. *I will be with him in trouble*, ſhould bear you up under all burdens. Let them

them be caſt down, that have not God in trouble to turn to.

(4.) Why ſhould they be ſad, as long as no outward diſpenſation of Providence, (be it never ſo ſad) can be interpreted as a mark or ſign of Gods hatred or Anger. Eccl. 9. 2, 3. *There is one event to the righteous and wicked.* Indeed, if it were a ſignification of the Lords wrath againſt a man, it would juſtifie our dejection; but this cannot be ſo: his heart is full of love, whileſt the face of Providence is full of frowns.

(5.) Why ſhould we be caſt down under ſad Providences, whilſt we have ſo great ſecurity, that even by the hands of theſe Providences God will do us good, and all theſe things ſhall *turn to our ſalvation*? Rom. 8. 28. By theſe God is but killing your luſts, weaning your hearts from a vain world, preventing, temptations, and exciting your deſires after heaven; this is all the hurt they ſhall do you, and ſhall that ſadden us?

(6.) Why ſhould we lay by our joy in God, when as the change of our condition is ſo nigh? It's but a little while, and ſorrows ſhall flee away: you ſhall never ſuffer more, *God will wipe away all tears*, Revel. 7. 17. Well then, you ſee there's no reaſon upon the account of Providence, to give up your joy and comfort in God. But if you will maintain it under all Providences, then be careful

(1.) To Clear up your Intereſt in, and Title to God. *Faith* may be ſeparated from comfort, but aſſurance cannot.

(2.) Mortifie your inordinate affections to earthly things. This makes Providences that deprive and croſs us ſo heavy. Mortifie your opinion and affection, and you ſenſibly lighten your affliction. It is ſtrong affection that makes ſtrong affliction.

(3.) Dwell much upon the meditation of the Lords near approach; and then all theſe things will ſeem but trifles to you. *Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.*

Exer-

(3) *Exercise heavenly mindedness, and keep your hearts upon things eternal, under all the Providences with which the Lord exercises you in this world*, Gen. 6. 9. *Noah* walked with God, yet met with as sad Providences in his day, as any man that ever lived since his time. But alas! we find most Providences, rather *stops*, than *steps* in our walk with God. If we be under comfortable Providences, how sensual, wanton and wordly do our hearts grow! And if sad Providences befall us, how dedolent or distracted are we! And this comes to pass partly through the *narrowness*, but mostly, through the *deceitfulness* of our spirits. Our hearts are narrow, and know not how to manage two businesses of such different natures, as Earthly and Heavenly matters are without detriment to one. *Pectora nostra duas curas non admittunt.* But certainly such a frame of spirit is attainable that will enable us to keep on in an even and steddy course with God, whatever befall us. Others have attained it, and why not we? Prosperous Providences are for the most part a dangerous state to the soul. The *Moon* never suffers an *Eclipse*, but at full; yet *Jehosophat*'s grace suffered no *Eclipse* from the fulness of his outward condition, who *had riches in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of Gods commandments*, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. *David*'s life was as full of cares, turmoils and incumbrances, as most men we read of; yet how spiritual the temper of his heart was, that excellent *Book of Psalms*, (which was mostly composed amidst those distractions) will acquaint us. The *Apostles* were cast into as great necessities, and suffered as hard things, as ever men did: yet how raised and heavenly their spirits were amidst all, who sees not? And certainly, if it were not possible to maintain heavenly-mindedness in such a state and posture of affairs, God would never exercise any of his people with such Providences: he would never give you so much of the world to lose your hearts in the love of it, or so little to distract you with

with the cares of it. If therefore we were more deeply ſanctified, and the tendencies of our hearts heavenward more ardent and vigorous; If we were more mortified to Earthly things, and could not but keep our due diſtance from them; our outward conditions would not at this rate draw forth and exerciſe our inward corruptions, nor would we hazard the loſs of ſo ſweet an enjoyment as our fellowſhip with God is. for the ſake of any concernment our bodies have on Earth.

(4.) *UNder all Providences maintain a contented heart with what the Lord allots you, be it more or leſs of the things of this world.* This grace muſt run parallel with all Providences. *Learn how to be full, and how to ſuffer want, and in every ſtate to be content,* Phil. 4. 12.

In this duty all men are concerned at all times, and in every ſtate, not only the people of God, but even the unregenerate alſo. I will therefore addreſs ſome conſiderations proper to both. And firſt to the unregenerate, to ſtop their mouths from repining, and charging God fooliſhly, when Providence croſſes them. Let them ſeriouſly conſider theſe four things.

(1.) That Hell and Eternal damnation are the portion of their cup, according to the tenour of Law, and Goſpel threatnings. Whatſoever therefore is ſhort of this is to be admired as the fruit of Gods ſtupendious patience, and forbearance towards them. Ah poor ſouls! Know you not, that you are men and women condemned to wrath by the plain ſentence of the Law? *Mark* 16. 16. *John* 3. 36. 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 6, 7. And if ſo, ſure there are other matters to exerciſe your thoughts, deſires. fears and cares about than theſe. Alas! if you cannot bear a frown of Providence, a light croſs in theſe things, how will you bear the everlaſting burnings! A man that is to loſe his head to morrow, is not very ſolicitous what bed he lyes on, or how his Table is furniſht the night before.

(2.) Conſider, though you be condemned perſons, and have no promiſe to entitle you to any mercy; yet there are very many mercies in your poſſeſſion at this day. Be your condition as afflictive as it will, is life nothing? eſpecially conſidering whither you muſt ſink, when that thread is cut. Are the neceſſary ſupports of life nothing? Doth not Providence miniſter to you theſe things, though you daily diſoblige it, and provoke God to ſend you to your own place? But, above all, is the *Goſpel* and precious means of ſalvation nothing, by which you yet are in a capacity of eſcaping the damnation of Hell? O what would the damned ſay, if they were but put into your condition once more? What, and yet fret againſt God; becauſe every thing elſe ſuits not your deſires?

(3.) Conſider, that if ever you be reſcued out of that miſerable condition you are in, ſuch croſs Providences, as theſe you complain of, are the moſt probable means to do it. Alas! proſperity and ſucceſs is not the way to ſave, but deſtroy you, *Prov.* 1. 32. You muſt be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction, if ever your ear be opened to inſtruction, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. Wo to you, if you go on ſmoothly in the way in which you are, and meet with no croſſes.

(4.) Laſtly, Conſider, all your troubles under which you complain, are pulled down upon your heads by your own ſins. You turn Gods mercies into ſin, and then fret againſt God, becauſe he turns your ſins into ſorrow. Your wayes and doings procure theſe things to you. Lay your hand therefore upon your mouth and ſay, *Why doth the living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſin*, Lam. 3. 39. But I muſt turn to the Lords people, who have leaſt pretences of all men to be diſſatisfied with any of Gods Providences, and yet are but too frequently found in that temper. And to them I ſhall offer the following conſiderations.

(1.) *Conſider your ſpiritual mercies and priviledges with which the Lord Jeſus hath inveſted you; and repine*

at

at your Lot of Providence if you can. One of theſe mercies alone, hath enough in it to ſweeten all your troubles in this world. When the Apoſtle conſidered them, his heart was overwhelmed with aſtoniſhment; ſo that he could not forbear in the midſt of all his outward troubles to cry out, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath abounded to us in all ſpiritual bleſſings*, &c. Eph. 1. 3. Oh, who that ſees ſuch an Inheritance ſetled upon him in *Chriſt*, can ever open his mouth more to repine at his Lot of Providence!

(2.) *Conſider your ſins, and that will make you contented with your Lot.* Yea, conſider two things in ſin. (1.) What it deſerves from God, and (2.) What it requires to mortifie and purge it in you. It deſerves from God Eternal ruine: the merit of Hell is in the leaſt vain thought. Every ſin forfeits all the mercies you have; and if ſo, rather wonder your mercies are ſo many, than that you have no more. Beſides, you cannot doubt, but your corruptions require all the croſſes, wants and troubles that are upon you, and it may be, a great deal more, to mortifie and ſubdue them. Don't you find, after all the rods that have been upon you, a proud heart ſtill, a vain and earthly heart ſtill? Oh how many bitter potions are but neceſſary to purge out this tough malignant humour!

(3.) *Conſider how near you are to the Change of your condition:* have but a little patience, and all will be as well with you as your hearts can deſire. It is no ſmall comfort to the Saints, that this world is the worſt place that ever they ſhall be in: things will better every day with them. If the *Traveller* have ſpent all his money, yet it doth not much trouble him, if he know himſelf within a few miles of his own home. If there be no *Candles* in the houſe, we do not much matter it, if we are ſure it's almoſt break of day; for then there will be no uſe for them. This is your caſe; *your ſalvation is nearer than when you believed*, Rom. 13. 11.

I have done with the directive part of this diſcourſe;

but before I paſs to this fifth Head, I judge it neceſſary to leave a few Cautions to prevent the abuſe of Providence, and your miſcarriages in your behaviour towards it. And

First Caution.

If Providence delay the performance of any mercy to you, that you have long waited and prayed for; yet ſee, that you deſpond not; nor grow weary of waiting upon God for that reaſon. It pleaſes the Lord oftentimes to try, and exerciſe his people this way, and make them cry, *How long Lord, how long?* Pſal. 13. 1, 2.

Theſe delayes both upon ſpiritual and temporal accounts are frequent, and when they befall us, we are too apt to interpret them as denyals, and fall into a ſinful deſpondency of mind, though there be no cauſe at all for it, *Pſal.* 31. 12. *Lam.* 3. 8 44. It is not alwayes that the returns of prayer are diſpatcht to us in the ſame hour they are asked of God, yet ſometimes it falls out ſo, *Iſa.* 65. 24. *Dan.* 9. 23. But though the Lord means to perform to us the mercies we deſire; yet he will ordinarily exerciſe our patience to wait for them; and that for theſe reaſons.

(1.) Becauſe *our* time is not the *proper* ſeaſon for us to receive our mercies in. Now the *ſeaſon* of mercy is a very great circumſtance that adds much to the value of it. God judges not as we do; we are all in haſte, and will have it now, Numb. 12. 13. *But he is a God of judgement, and bleſſed are they that wait for him,* Iſa. 30. 18.

(2.) Afflictive Providences have not accompliſhed that deſign upon our hearts they were ſent for, when we are ſo earneſt and impatient for a change of them; and till then the rod muſt not be taken off, *Iſa.* 10. 12.

(3.) The more prayers and ſearchings of heart come between our wants and ſupplies, our afflictions and reliefs, the ſweeter are our reliefs and ſupplies thereby made to us, Iſa. 25. 9. *This is our God,*

God, we have waited for him, and he will ſave us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will rejoyce and be glad in his ſalvation. This recompenſes the delay, and payes us for all the expences of our patience.

But though there be ſuch weighty reaſons for the ſtop and delay of refreſhing comfortable Providences; yet we cannot bear it, our hands hang down and we faint, Pſal. 69. 3. *I am weary of my crying, my throat is dry, mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.* For alas! we judge by ſenſe and appearance, and conſider not, that Gods *heart* may be *towards* us, whilſt the *hand* of his Providence ſeems to be *againſt* us. If things continue at one rate with us, we think our prayers are loſt, and our hopes periſhed from the Lord: much more when things grow worſe and worſe, and our darkneſs and trouble encreaſes, as uſually it doth juſt before the break of day and change of our condition, then we conclude, God is angry with our prayers. See *Gideon*'s reply, *Judges* 6. 13. This even ſtaggered a *Moſe*'s faith, Exod. 5. 22, 23. O what groundleſs Jealouſies and ſuſpicions of God are found at ſuch times in the hearts of his own Children! *Job* 9. 16, 17. *Pſal.* 77. 7, 8, 9.

But this is our great evil, and to prevent it in future tryals, I will offer a few proper conſiderations in the caſe.

The delay of your mercies, is really for your advantage. You read Iſa. 30. 18. *The Lord waits that he may be gracious.* What is that? Why, it's nothing elſe but the time of his preparation of mercies for you, and your hearts for mercy, that ſo you may have it with the greateſt advantage of comfort. The fooliſh Child would pluck the apple while it's green; but when it's ripe, it drops of its own accord, and is more pleaſant and wholſome. (1.)

It's a greater mercy, to have an heart willing to refer all to God, and be at his diſpoſe; than to enjoy preſently the mercy we are moſt eager and impatient for. In that God pleaſes *you*, in this you pleaſe (2.)

God. A mercy may be given you as the fruit of common Providence; but such a temper of heart is the fruit of special grace. So much as the glorifying of God is better than the content and pleasure of the creature, so much is such a frame better, than such a fruition.

(3.) Expected mercies are never nearer, than when the hearts and hopes of Gods people are lowest. Thus in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and *Babylon*, Ezek. 37. 11. So we have found it in our own personal concerns: *at Evening time it shall be light*, Zach. 14. 7. When we look for increasing darkness, light arises.

(4.) Our unfitness for mercy, is the reason why they are delayed so long. We put the blocks into the way of mercy, and then repine, that they make no more haste to us, Isa. 59. 1, 2. *The Lords hand is not shortned, but our iniquities have separated betwixt him and us.*

(5.) Consider, the mercies you wait for, are the fruits of pure grace, you deserve them not, nor can claim them upon any Title of desert; and therefore have reason to wait for them in a patient and thankful frame.

(6.) Consider, how many *Millions* of men as good as you by nature, are cut off from all hope and expectation of mercy for ever, and there remains to them nothing but *a fearful expectation of wrath.* This might have been your case; and therefore be not of an impatient spirit under the expectations of mercy.

Second Caution.

Pry not too curiously into the secrets of Providence, *nor suffer your shallow reason arrogantly to judge and censure its designs.*

Scriptura opposuit hic curiositati nostra re-

There be hard Text in the *Works*, as well as in the *Word* of God. It becomes us modestly and humbly to *reverence*, but not to *dogmatize* too boldly and positively

ſitively upon them: a man may eaſily get a ſtrain by over-reaching. *When I thought to know this* (ſaith *Aſaph*) *it was too wonderful for me.* I thought to know this, there was the arrogant attempt of reaſon, there he pryed into the *Arcana* of Providence; but it was too wonderful for me, it was *labor inutilis*, as *Calvin* expounds it. He pryed ſo far into that puzzling Myſterie of the *Afflictions* of the *Righteous*, and *Proſperity* of the *wicked*, till it begat *envy* towards *them*, and *deſpondency* in *himſelf*, Pſal. 73. v. 3. 13. and this was all he got by ſummoning Providence to the bar of reaſon. Holy *Job* was guilty of this evil, and ingenuouſly aſhamed of it, *Job* 42. 3.

pagulaque dam, qua perfringere nemini licet, neque poteſt; cui non ſit conſtitutum deum in judicium vocare; hinc eſt quod judicia dei dicuntur anezichniaſta, ne ſe fruſtra fatiget non ſine ſummo periculo in eo inveſtigando mens humana. Cameronis prælect. p. 112.

I know, there is nothing in the Word or in the Works of God, that is repugnant to ſound reaſon: but there are ſome things in both, which are oppoſite to carnal reaſon; as well as above right reaſon; and therefore our reaſon never ſhews it ſelf more unreaſonable, than in ſummoning thoſe things to its bar, which tranſcend its ſphere and capacity. Manifold are the miſchiefs which enſue upon this practice.

(1.) By this we are drawn into an unworthy ſuſpicion and diſtruſt of the faithfulneſs of God in the Promiſes. *Sarah* laught at the tydings of the Son of Promiſe, becauſe reaſon contradicted, and told her, it was naturally impoſſible, *Gen.* 18. 13, 14.

(2.) Hence comes deſpondency of mind, and faintneſs of heart under afflictive Providences; reaſon can diſcern no good fruits in them, nor deliverance from them, and ſo our hands hang down in a ſinful diſcouragement, ſaying, all theſe things are againſt us, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1.

(3.) Hence flow temptations to deliver our ſelves by indirect and ſinful mediums, *Iſa.* 30. 15, 16. When our own reaſon fills us with a diſtruſt of Providence, it naturally prompts us to ſinful ſhifts, and there leaves us entangled in the ſnares of our own making.

Beware therefore you lean not too much ſeem-

own reaſons and underſtandings. Nothing is more plauſible, nothing more dangerous. In others matters it is appointed the Arbiter and Judge, we make it ſo here, and therefore we are ſo diffident and diſtruſtful notwithſtanding the fulleſt ſecurity of the Promiſes, whileſt our reaſon ſtands by unſatisfied.

The Fifi Head.

HAving given direction for the due management of this great and important duty, what remains, but that we now ſet our hearts to it, and make it the conſtant work of every day throughout our lives? O what peace, what pleaſure, what ſtability, what holy courage and confidence would reſult from ſuch an obſervation of Providence as hath been directed to! But alas! we may ſay with reference to the voices of Divine Providence, as it is Job 33. 14. *God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.* Many a time Providence hath ſpoken *Inſtruction* in duty, *Conviction* for iniquity, *Encouragement* under deſpondency; but we regard it not. How greatly are we all wanting to our duty, and comfort by this neglect! It will be but needful therefore to ſpread before you, the lovelineſs and excellency of walking with God in a due and daily obſervation of his Providences, that our ſouls may be fully engaged to it.

Firſt Motive.

AND Firſt, Let me offer this, as a moving argument to all gracious ſouls; *That by this means you may maintain ſweet and ſenſible communion with God from day to day.* And what is there deſirable in this world, in compariſon therewith! *Thou Lord haſt made me glad through thy works: I will triumph in the works of thy hands*, Pſal. 92. 4. Your hearts may

may be as ſweetly and ſenſibly refreſht by the works of Gods hands, as by the words of his mouth, *Pſal.* 104. *per totum* is ſpent in the conſideration of the works of Providence, which ſo filled the *Pſalmiſt*'s heart, that, by way of ejaculation, he expreſſes the effect of it, Ver. 34. *My Meditation of him ſhall be ſweet.*

Communion with God properly and ſtrictly taken, conſiſts in two things; *viz.* Gods manifeſtation of himſelf to the ſoul, and the ſouls anſwerable returns to God. This is that *koinonia* fellowſhip we have here with God. Now God manifeſts himſelf to his people by Providences as well as Ordinances; neither is there any grace in a ſanctified ſoul hid from the gracious influences of his Providential manifeſtations. Sometimes the Lord manifeſts his diſpleaſure and anger againſt the ſins of his people in correcting and rebuking Providences. His rods have a chiding voice, Micah. 6. 9. *Hear the rod and who hath appointed it.* This diſcovery of Gods anger kindly melts and thaws a gracious ſoul, and produces a double ſweet effect upon it, namely, *repentance* for ſins paſt, and due *caution* againſt future ſins. (1.) It thaws and melts the heart for ſins committed. Thus *David*'s heart was melted for his ſin, when the hand of God was heavy upon him in affliction, *Pſal.* 32. 4, 5. Thus the *Captive Church*, upon whom fell the ſaddeſt and moſt diſmal Providence that ever befell any of Gods people in any age of the world; ſee how their hearts are broken for ſin under this ſevere rebuke, *Lam.* 2. 17, 18, 19. And then, (2.) For caution againſt ſin for the time to come; it's plain, that the rebukes of Providence leave that effect alſo upon gracious hearts, *Ezra* 9. 13, 14. *Pſal.* 85. 8.

Sometimes he cheers and comforts the hearts of his people with ſmiling and reviving Providences, both publick and perſonal. There are times of lifting up as well as caſting down by the hand of Providence. The Scene changes, the aſpects of Providence are very cheerful and encouraging: their Winter

ſeems to be over: they put off their garments of mourning; and then, Ah, what ſweet returns are made to heaven by gracious ſouls! Doth God lift them up by proſperity? they alſo will liſt up their God by praiſes. See *Pſal.* 18. *Title*, and *v.* 1, 2, 3. So *Moſes* and the people with him, *Exod* 15. when God had delivered them from *Pharaoh*, how do they exalt him in a ſong of thankſgiving, which for the elegancy and ſpirituality of it, is made an Emblem of the doxologies given to God in glory by the Saints! *Rev.* 15. 3.

Upon the whole, whatever effects our Communion with God in any of his Ordinances doth uſe to produce upon our hearts, the ſame we may obſerve to follow our converſing with him in his Providences. For,

(1.) It is uſually found in the experience of all the Saints, that in what Ordinance or duty ſoever they have any ſenſible communion with God, it naturally produces in their ſpirits a deep abaſement and humiliation from the ſenſe of divine condeſcenſions to ſuch vile poor Worms as we are. Thus *Abraham*, Gen. 18. 27. *I am but duſt and aſhes.* The ſame effect follows our converſe with God in his Providences. Thus when God had in the way of his Providence proſpered *Jacob*, how doth he lay himſelf at the feet of God, as a man overwhelmed with the ſenſe of mercy! See Gen. 32. 5, 10. *And Jacob ſaid, I am not worthy of the leaſt of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou haſt ſhewed thy ſervant; for with my ſtaff I paſſed over this Jordan, and now am become two bands.* Thus alſo it was with *David*, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *Who am I, and what is my Fathers houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto!* And I doubt not, but ſome of you have found the like frame of heart upon you, that theſe holy men here expreſſed. Can you not remember when God lifted you up by Providence, how you caſt down your ſelves before him, and have been viler in your own eyes than ever! Why, thus do all gracious hearts; What am I, that the Lord ſhould do thus and

and thus for me! O that ever ſo great and holy a God ſhould thus be concerned for ſo vile and ſinful a Worm!

Doth Communion with God in Ordinances, melt the heart into love to God? *Cant.* 2. 3, 4, 5. Why, ſo doth the obſervation of his Providences alſo. Never did any man converſe with Gods works of Providence aright, but found his heart at ſome times melted into love to the God of his mercies, *Pſal.* 18. 1. compared with the Title. When God had delivered him from the hand of *Saul*, and all his Enemies, he ſaid, *I will love thee O Lord my ſtrength.* Every man loves the mercies of God, but a Saint loves the God of his mercies. The mercies of God; as they are the fewel of a wicked mans luſts, ſo they are fewel to maintain a good mans love to God; not that their love to God is grounded upon theſe external benefits, Not thine, but thee, O Lord, is the *motto* of a gracious ſoul; but yet theſe things ſerve to blow up the flame of love to God in their hearts, and they find it ſo. (2.)

Doth Communion with God ſet the keeneſt edge upon the ſoul againſt ſin? You ſee it doth: and have a pregnant Inſtance of it in *Moſes*, when he had been with God in the *Mount* for forty dayes, and had there enjoyed communion with him; when he came down and ſaw the *Calf* the people had made; ſee what an holy *paroxyſim* of zeal and anger it caſt his ſoul into, *Exod.* 32. 19, 20. Why, the ſame effect you may diſcern to follow the Saints converſe with God in his Providences. What was that which pierced the heart of *David* with ſuch a deep ſenſe of the evil of his ſin, which is ſo abundantly manifeſted in *Pſalm* 51. throughout? Why, if you look into the Title you ſhall find, it was the effect of what *Nathan* had laid before him: and if you conſult 2 *Sam.* 12. 7, 8, 9, 10. you ſhall find, it was the goodneſs of God manifeſted to him in the ſeveral endearing Providences of his life, which in this he had ſo evilly requited the Lord for, that broke his heart to pieces in the ſenſe of it: and I doubt not, but ſome of us have ſometimes found the (3.)

like

like effects, by comparing Gods wayes and our own together.

(4.) Doth Communion with the Lord enlarge the heart for obedience and ſervice? Surely it is as oyl to the wheels, that makes them run on freely and nimbly their courſe. Thus when *Iſaiah* had obtained a ſpecial manifeſtation of God, and the Lord askt, *Whom ſhall I ſend*? he preſents a ready ſoul for the employment, Iſa. 6. 8. *Here am* I, *Lord, ſend me.* Why, the very ſame effect follows ſanctified Providences, as you may ſee in *Jehoſaphat*, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. and in *David*, Pſal. 116. 12. O when a ſoul conſiders what God hath done for him, he cannot chuſe but ſay, what ſhall I return? how ſhall I anſwer theſe engagements?

And thus you ſee, what ſweet Communion a ſoul may have with God in the way of his Providences. O that you would thus walk with him! How much of Heaven might be found on Earth this way! And certainly, it will never repent the Lord he hath done you good, when his mercies produce ſuch effects upon your hearts: he will ſay of every favour thus improved, It was well beſtowed, and will rejoyce over you to do you good for ever.

Second Motive.

A *Great part of the pleaſure and delight of the Chriſtian life is made out of the obſervations of Providence.* It is ſaid, Pſal. 111 2. *The works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein*: (*i. e.*) the ſtudy of Providence is ſo ſweet and pleaſant, that it invites and allures the ſoul to ſearch and dive into it. How pleaſant is it to a well tempered ſoul to behold and obſerve.

(1.) The ſweet harmony and conſent of divine Attributes in the iſſues of Providence! They may ſeem ſometimes to jarr and claſh, to part with each other, and go contrary wayes; but they only ſeem

ſo

ſo to do; for in the winding up, they alwayes meet and embrace each other, Pſal. 85. 10. *Mercy and Truth have met together: Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other.* It is ſpoken with an immediate reference to that ſignal Providence of *Iſraels* deliverance out of the *Babyloniſh* captivity, and the ſweet effects thereof: wherein the truth and righteouſneſs of God in the promiſes, did as it were kiſs and embrace the mercy and peace that was contained in the performance of them, after they had ſeemed for ſeventy years to be at a great diſtance from each other. For it is an alluſion to the uſual demonſtrations of joy and gladneſs, that two dear friends are wont to give and receive, after a long abſence and ſeparation from each other: they no ſooner meet, but they ſmile, embrace and kiſs each other. Even thus it is here. The word *Niphkaſhu* may be, (and by ſome is) rendered, *have met us*, and that alſo is true, for when ever theſe bleſſed Promiſes and Performances meet and kiſs each other, they are alſo joyfully embraced and kiſſed by believing ſouls. There is, I doubt not, a mediate reference of this Scripture to the *Meſſiah* alſo, and our redemption by him: In him it is that theſe divine Attributes which before ſeemed to claſh and contradict one another in the buſineſs of our ſalvation, have a ſweet agreement and accompliſhment. Truth and Righteouſneſs do in him meet with Mercy and Peace in a bleſſed agreement. What a lovely ſight is this! and how pleaſant to behold! O if with *Habbakuk*, *chap.* 2. *v.* 3. we would but ſtand upon our Watch-Tower to take due obſervations of Providence; what rare proſpects might we have! *Luther* underſtands it of the Word of God, *q. d.* I will look into the Word, and obſerve there how God accompliſheth all things, and brings them to paſs, and how his works are the fulfilling of his Word. Others (as *Calvin*) underſtand it of a mans own retiring thoughts and meditations, wherein a man carefully obſerves what purpoſes and deſigns God hath upon the World

Occurrunt nobis, Syriac.

in

in general, or upon himself in particular, and how the Truth and Righteousness of God in the Word work themselves through all difficulties and impediments, and meet in the mercy, peace and happiness of the Saints at last. Every Believer (take it in which sense you will,) hath his *Watch-Tower* as well as *Habbakuk*: and give me leave to say, it's an *Angelical employment* to stand upon it, and behold the consent of Gods Attributes, the accomplishment of his Ends, and our own happiness in the works of Providence. For this is the very joy of the Angels and Saints in Heaven, to see Gods Ends wrought out, and his Attributes glorified in the mercy and peace of the Church, *Rev.* 14. 1; 2, 3. & 8.

(2.) And as it's a pleasant sight to see the harmony of Gods Attributes, so it is exceeding pleasant to behold the resurrection of our own prayers and hopes as from the dead. Why, this you may often see, if you will duly observe the works of Providence towards you. We hope and pray for such and such mercies to the Church, or to our selves; but God delayes the accomplishment of our hopes, suspends the answer of our prayers; and seems to speak to us, as Hab. 2. 3. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry:* but we have no patience to wait the time of the Promise, our hopes languish and dye in the interim; and we say with the despondent Church, Lam. 3. 18. *Our hope is perished from the Lord;* but Oh, how sweet and comfortable is it, to see these prayers fulfilled, after we have given up all expectation of them! May we not say of them, as the Scripture speaks of the restoration of the Jews, it is even *life from the dead.* This was *David*'s case, *Psal.* 31. 22. he gave up his hopes and prayers for lost, yet lived to see the comfortable and unexpected returns of them. And this was the case of *Job*, *chap.* 6. 11. he had given up all expectation of better dayes; and yet this man lived to see a resurrection of all his lost comforts with an advantage.

Think

Think how that change and unexpected turn of Providence affected his ſoul: it is with our hopes and prayers as with our *Alms*, *Caſt thy bread on the waters, for thou ſhalt find it after many dayes*, Eccleſ. 11. 1. or as it was with *Jacob*, who had given over all hopes of ever ſeeing his beloved *Joſeph* again, but when a ſtrange and unexpected Providence had reſtored that hopeleſs mercy to him again, Oh how raviſhing and tranſporting was it? *Gen.* 46. 29, 30.

(3.) What a tranſporting pleaſure is it, to behold great bleſſings and advantages to us wrought by Providence, out of thoſe very things that ſeemed to threaten our ruine or miſery? and yet by due obſerving the wayes of Providence, you may to your ſingular comfort find it ſo. Little did *Joſeph* think his tranſportation into *Egypt*, had been in order to his advancement there; yet he lived with joy to ſee it, and with a thankful heart to acknowledge it, *Gen.* 45. 5. Wait and obſerve, and you ſhall aſſuredly find that Promiſe, *Rom.* 8. 28. working out its way through all Providences. How many times have you been made to ſay as *David* Pſal. 119. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* O what a difference have we ſeen betwixt our afflictions at our firſt meeting with them, and our parting from them! We have entertained them with ſighs and tears, but parted from them with joy, bleſſing God for them, as the happy Inſtruments of our good. Thus our fears and ſorrows are turned into praiſes and ſongs of thankſgiving.

(4.) What unſpeakable comfort is it for a poor ſoul, that ſees nothing but ſin and vileneſs in it ſelf, at the ſame time to ſee what an high eſteem and value the great God hath for him! This may be diſcerned by a due attendance to Providence, for there a man ſees *goodneſs and mercy following* him through all his dayes, as it is *Pſal.* 23. 6. Other men proſecute good, and it flyes from them, they can never overtake it; but goodneſs and mercy follow the people of God, and they cannot avoid or eſcape it: it gives them chaſe day by day, and finds them out; even when they ſometimes

times put themſelves by ſin out of the way of it. In all the Providences that befall them, goodneſs and mercy purſues them. O with what a melting heart do they ſometimes reflect upon theſe things! *and will not the goodneſs of God be diſcouraged from following me, notwithſtanding all my vile affronts and abuſes of it in former mercies? Lord, what am I, that mercy ſhould thus purſue me, when vengeance and wrath purſue others as good by nature as I am?* It certainly argues the great eſteem God hath of a man, when he thus follows him with ſanctified Providences (whether they be comfort or croſſes) for his good. And ſo much is plain, from Job 7. 18. *Lord what is man, that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Certainly, Gods people are his treaſure, and by this it appears that they are ſo, that he withdraws not his eye from them, *Job* 36. 7. I ſay not, that Gods favour and reſpect to a man, may be concluded ſingly from his Providences; but ſanctified Providences may very much clear it to us: and when it doth ſo: it cannot but be matter of exceeding great joy.

(5.) To conclude, what is there in all this world, that can give a ſoul ſuch joy and comfort, as to find himſelf by every thing ſet on and furthered in his way to Heaven. And yet this may be diſcerned, by an heedful attendance to the effects and iſſues of Providences.

How croſs ſoever the Winds and Tides of Providence at any time ſeem to us, yet nothing is more certain, than that they all conſpire to haſten ſanctified ſouls to God, and fit them for glory.

St. *Paul* knew, that both his bonds and the afflictions added to them ſhould turn to, or (as the word *apobeſetai* imports) finally iſſue in his ſalvation, *Phil.* 1. 19. Not that in themſelves they ſerve to any ſuch purpoſe; but as they are over-ruled and determined to ſuch an end, *through Prayer, and the ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt.* When *Prayer* the external, and the *Spirit* the internal means are joyned with them; then Afflictions themſelves become excellent means

to

to promote ſalvation. And have we not with joy obſerved, how thoſe very things, that ſenſe and reaſon tell us are oppoſite to our happineſs, have been the moſt bleſſed Inſtruments to promote it? How hath God bleſſed *Croſſes* to mortifie *corruption*, *wants* to kill our *wanttonneſs*, *diſappointments* to wean us from the *world!* O we little think, how comfortable thoſe things will be in the review, which are ſo burdenſome to preſent ſenſe!

The Third Motive.

IN the next place, I beſeech you conſider, *What an effectual means the due obſervation of Providence will be to over-power and ſuppreſs the natural Atheiſm that is in your hearts.*

There is a natural ſeed of Atheiſm in the beſt hearts' and this is very much nouriſhed, by paſſing a raſh and falſe judgement upon the works of Providence. When we ſee wicked ones to proſper in the world, and godly men cruſhed and deſtroyed in the way of righteouſneſs and integrity; it may tempt us to think, there is no advantage by religion, and all our ſelf-denyal and holineſs. to be little better than loſt labour. Thus ſtood the caſe with good *Aſaph*, Pſal. 73. 12, 13. *Behold, theſe are the ungodly that proſper in the world, they increaſe in riches:* and what doth the fleſh infer from thence? Why no leſs than the unprofitableneſs of the wayes of holineſs, *Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain; and waſhed my hands in innocency.* This irreligious Inference carnal reaſon was ready to draw from the diſpenſations of outward proſperity to wicked men; but now if we would heedfully obſerve, either the ſignal retributions of Providence to *many* of them in *this world*, or to *all* of them in the *world to come*; O what a full confirmation is this to our faith! Pſal. 9. 16. *The Lord is known by the Judgements that he executeth.* The fifty eighth *Pſalm* contains the Characters of the moſt prodigious ſinners, whoſe wickedneſs is aggravated.

By

By the deliberation with which it's committed, *Ver.* 2.
By their habit and cuſtom in it, *V.* 3.
By their incorrigibleneſs and perſiſtence in it, *Ver.* 4, 5.

And the Providence of God is there invited

To deſtroy their power, *V.* 6. and that either
By a gradual and inſenſible conſumption of them, *V.* 7, 8. or
By a ſuddain and unexpected ſtroke, *V.* 9.

And what ſhall the effects of ſuch Providences be ro the Righteous? Why, it ſhall be matter of joy, *Ver.* 10. And great confirmation to their faith in God, Ver. 11. *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

And on the contrary, how convincingly clear are thoſe Providences, that demonſtrate the Being, Wiſdom, Power, Love and Faithfulneſs of God, in the ſupporting, preſerving and delivering of the Righteous, in all their dangers, fears and difficulties? In theſe things the Lord ſhews himſelf to his people, *Pſal.* 94. 1. Yea, he ſhews himſelf to ſpiritual eyes in theſe Providences, as clearly, as the Sun manifeſts himſelf by his own beams of light, Hab. 3. 3, 4. *His brightneſs was as the light, and he had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power.* It's ſpoken of the Lords going forth for his people in in their deliverance from their Enemies: and then he had horns or rayes and beams of power and mercy coming out of his hands; by his hands, are meant his Providential adminiſtrations and diſpenſations, and the horns that came out of them, are nothing elſe but the glorious diſplay of his Attributes in thoſe Providences. How did God make himſelf known to his people in that ſignal deliverance of them out of *Egypt*? See *Exod.* 6. 3. then he was known to them by his name

name *Jehovah*, in giving being by his Providences to the mercies promiſed.

Thus when *Chriſt* ſhall give his people the laſt and greateſt deliverance from *Antichriſt*, he ſhall ſhew himſelf to his people in a veſture dipt in blood, and his Name ſhall be called, *The Word of God*, Rev. 19. 13. His Name was the Word of God before; but then he was the Word *revealing* and diſcovering the promiſes and truths of God; now *accompliſhing* and fulfilling them. That his Name is near, his wonderful works declare, *Pſal.* 75. 1.

But more particularly, let us bring it home to our own experience. It may be, we find our ſelves ſometimes aſſaulted with Atheiſtical thoughts: we are tempted to think God hath left all things below to the courſe and ſway of nature, that our prayers reach him not, as it is *Lam.* 3. 44. that he regards not what evils befall us. But, tell me Saints, have you not enough at hand to ſtop the mouths of all ſuch temptations? O do but reflect upon your own Experiences, and ſolemnly ask your own hearts,

(1.) Have you never ſeen the All-ſufficient God in the proviſions he hath made for you and yours, throughout all the way that you have gone! Who was it that ſupplyed to you whatever was needful in all your ſtraits? Was it not the Lord? *'Tis he that hath given bread to them that fear him, and hath been ever mindful of his Covenant*. Pſal. 111. 5. O do but conſider the conſtancy, ſeaſonableneſs, and at ſometimes the extraordinarineſs of theſe proviſions, and how they have been given in upon prayer, and ſhut your eyes if you can, againſt the convincing evidence of that great truth, Job 36. 7. *He withdraweth not his eye from the Righteous.*

(2.) Have you not plainly diſcerned the care of God in your preſervations from ſo many and great dangers as you have eſcaped and been carried through hitherto? How is it, that you have over-lived ſo many mortal dangers, ſickneſſes, accidents, deſigns of Enemies to ruine you? It is I preſume, beyond queſtion

ſtion with you, that the very finger of God hath been in theſe things, and that it is by his care alone, you have been preſerved. When God had ſo ſignally delivered *David* from a dangerous diſeaſe and the plots of Enemies againſt him, *by this* (ſaid he) *I know thou favoureſt me, becauſe mine enemy doth not triumph over me*, Pſal. 41. 11. he gathered from thoſe gracious protections, the care God had over him.

(3.) Have you not plainly diſcerned the hand of God, in the returns and accompliſhments of your prayers? Nothing can be more evident than this to men of obſervation, Pſal. 34. 4, 5, 6. *I ſought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightned, and their faces were not aſhamed. This poor man cryed, and the Lord heard him, and ſaved him out of all his troubles.* Parallel to this, runs the experience of thouſands and ten thouſands of Chriſtians this day; they know they have the petitions they asked of him. The *Mercy* carries the very impreſs and ſtamp of the *Duty* upon it. So that we can ſay, This is the *Mercy*, the very Mercy I have ſo often *ſought* God about. O how ſatisfying, and convincing are theſe things!

(4.) Have you not evidently diſcerned the Lords hand, in the guiding and directing of your paths, to your unforeſeen advantage? Things that you never projected for your ſelves, have been brought about beyond all your thoughts. Many ſuch things are with God; and which of all the Saints hath not found that word *Jer.* 10. 23. verified by clear and undeniable experience? *The way of man is not in himſelf.* I preſume, if you will but look over the mercies you poſſeſs this day, you will find three to one, it may be ten to one thus wrought by the Lord for you. And how ſatisfying beyond all Arguments in the world are theſe experiences, That there is a God to whom his people are exceeding dear, *a God that performeth all things for them!*

(5.) Is it not fully convictive, that there is a God who

who takes care of you, in as much as you have found in all the temptations and difficulties of your lives his promises still fulfilled, and faithfully performed in all those conditions? I appeal to your selves. if you have not seen that Promise made good, Psal. 91. 15. *I will be with him in trouble*, and that 1 Cor. 10. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Have not these been as clearly made out by Providence before your eyes, as the Sun at Noon day? What room then is left for Atheistical suggestions in your breasts?

The Fourth Motive.

The recording and Recognizing of the performances of Providence, will be a singular support to faith in future exigencies. This excellent use of it lyes full in the very eye of the Text. There never befell *David* in all his troubles, a greater strait and distress than this; and doubtless his faith had staggered, had not the considerations of former Providence come in to its relief. From this *Topick* faith argues, and that very strongly and conclusively. So did *David*'s faith in many exigencies: when he was to encounter the *Champion* of the *Philistins*, it was from former Providence that he encouraged himself, 1 *Sam.* 17. 73. And the Apostle *Paul* improves his experiences to the same purpose, 2 *Cor.* 1. 9, 10. Indeed the whole Scripture is full of it: What Christian understands not the exceeding usefulness of those experiences he hath had to relieve and enliven? But I shall not satisfie my self with the common assertion, than which nothing is more trite in the lips of professors: but will labour to shew you, wherein the great usefulness of our Recorded Experiences, for encouraging faith labouring under difficulties, consists. To this purpose, I shall desire the Reader to ponder seriously these following particulars.

Diligenter perpendamus res præteritas, tum præsentes; ut ad futura parati, & accincti simus: fides argumentari solet à præterito, ad præsens: & ab utroque ad futurum. Alsted.

How

(1.) How much advantage thoſe things have upon our ſouls, which we have already felt and taſted, beyond thoſe which were never reliſhed by any former experience? What is Experience? but the bringing down of the objects of faith to the dijudication and teſt of ſpiritual ſenſe? Now when any thing hath been once taſted, felt and judged by a former Experience, it is much more eaſily believed and received when it occurrs again. It's much eaſier for faith to travel in a path that is well known to it, having formerly trod it, than to beat out a new one which it never trod, nor can ſee one ſtep before it. Hence it is, though there be a difficulty in all the acts of faith, yet ſcarce in any like the firſt adventure it makes upon *Chriſt*; and the reaſon lyes here, becauſe in the *ſubſequent* acts it hath all its former experiences to aid and encourage it; but in the *firſt adventure* it hath none at all of its own it takes a path which it never knew before.

To truſt God without any tryal or experience is a more noble act of faith; but to truſt him after we have often tryed him, is known to be more eaſie. O 'tis no ſmall advantage to a ſoul in a new plunge and diſtreſs, to be able to ſay, This is not the firſt time I have been in theſe deeps, and yet emerged out of them! Hence it was, that *Chriſt* rub'd up his Diſciples memories with what Providence had formerly wrought for them in a day of ſtraits, Matth. 16. 8, 9, 10, 11. *O ye of little faith, why reaſon ye among your ſelves, becauſe ye have brought no bread? do ye not yet underſtand, neither remember? q. d.* Were ye never under any ſtrait for bread before now; Is this the firſt difficulty that ever your faith combated with? No, no, you have felt ſtraits, and experienced the power and care of God in ſupplying them, before now; and therefore I cannot but call you men of *little faith*; for a very ordinary and ſmall meaſure of faith, aſſiſted with ſo much experience as you have had, would enable you to truſt God. There is as much difference betwixt believing before, and after experience, as there is betwixt ſwimming with bladd-

bladders, and our firſt venture into the deep waters without them.

What a ſingular encouragement to faith do former Experiences yield it, by anſwering all the pleas and objections of unbelief drawn from the *object* of faith? Now there be two things that unbelief ſtumbles at in *God*: One is his Power, the other his Willingneſs to help. (2.)

(1.) Unbelief objects the impoſſibility of relief in deep diſtreſſes, Pſal. 78. 19. *Can God furniſh a Table in the Wilderneſs? can he give bread alſo? can he provide fleſh for his people?* O vile and unworthy thoughts of God! proceeding from our meaſuring the immenſe and boundleſs power of God, by our own line and meaſure: becauſe we ſee not which way relief ſhould come, we conclude, none is to be expected. But all theſe reaſonings of Unbelief are vanquiſht by a ſerious reflection upon our own Experiences: God hath helped, therefore he can, Iſa. 59. 1. *His hand is not ſhortned:* (*i. e.*) he hath as much power and ability as formerly.

(2.) Unbelief objects againſt the Will of *God*, and queſtions, whether he will now be gracious, though he hath formerly been ſo. But after ſo many experiences of his readineſs to help, what room for doubting remains? Thus *Paul* reaſoned from the experience of what he had done, to what he would do, 2 Cor. 1. 10. and ſo did *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 36. Indeed if a man had never experienced the goodneſs of God to him, it were not ſo heinous a ſin to queſtion his willingneſs to do him good; but what place is left after ſuch frequent tryals?

It gives great encouragement to faith, as it anſwers the objections of unbelief drawn from the *ſubject*. Now theſe Objections are of two ſorts alſo. (3.)

(1.) Such as are drawn from our great unworthineſs. How (ſaith Unbelief) can ſo ſinful and vile a creature expect, that ever God ſhould do this or that for me? 'Tis true, we find he did great things for *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, *Jacob*, *Moſes*, &c. but theſe were men

men of eminent holineſs, men that obeyed God; and denyed themſelves for him, and lived more in a day to his glory, than ever I did all my dayes.

Well, but what ſignifies all this to a ſoul, that under all its ſenſible vileneſs and unworthineſs hath taſted the goodneſs of God as well as they? As unworthy as I am, God hath been good to me notwithſtanding: his mercy appeared firſt to me, when I was worſe than I am now, both in *condition* and *diſpoſition*; and therefore I will ſtill expect the continuance of his goodneſs to me, though I deſerve it not. *If when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his life*? Rom. 5. 10.

(2.) Such as are drawn from the extremity of our preſent condition, if troubles or dangers grow to an height, and we ſee nothing but ruine and miſery in the eye of reaſon before us; now unbelief becomes importune and troubleſome to the ſoul, now where are thy prayers, thy hopes, yea, where is now thy God?

But all this is eaſily put by and avoided, by conſulting our experiences in former caſes. This is not the firſt time I have been in theſe ſtraits, nor the firſt time I have had the ſame doubts and deſpondencies; and yet, God hath carried me through all, Pſal. 77. 7, 8, 9, &c. This is it that ſuffers not a Chriſtian to unravel all his hopes in an hour of temptation. O how uſeful are theſe things to the people of God.

The Fifth Motive.

THe Recognition of former Providences will miniſter to your ſouls continual matter of praiſe and thanksgiving, which is the very employment of the Angels in Heaven, and the ſweeteſt part of our lives on Earth.

See Pſal. 61. 7, 8. If God will prepare Mercy and Truth for *David*, he will prepare Praiſes for his God.

and

and that daily. So Pſal. 71. 6. *By thee have I been holden up from the womb, thou art he that took me out of my Mothers bowels*; (there Mercies from the beginning are recognized.) *My praiſe ſhall be continually of thee:* there the natural reſult of thoſe recognitions is expreſſed.

There be five things belonging to the praiſe of God, and all of them have relation to his Providences exerciſed about us.

(1.) A careful Obſervation of the Mercies we receive from him, *Iſa.* 41. 17, 18, 19, 20. This is fundamental to all praiſe: God cannot be glorified for the mercies we never noted.

(2.) A faithful Remembrance of the favours received, Pſal. 103. 2. *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits.* Hence the Lord brands the Ingratitude of his people, Pſal. 106. 13. *They ſoon forgat his works.*

(3.) A due Appreciation and Valuation of every Providence that doth us good. 1 *Sam.* 12. 24. That Providence that fed them in the Wilderneſs with Manna, was a moſt remarkable Providence to them; but they not valuing it at its worth, God had not that praiſe for it which he expected, *Numb.* 11. 6.

(4.) The Excitation of all the faculties and powers of the ſoul in the acknowledgement of theſe mercies to us. Thus *David*, Pſal. 103. 1. *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul; and all that is within me bleſs his holy name.* Soul-praiſe is the very ſoul of praiſe: this is the fat and marrow of that thank-offering.

(5.) A ſuitable Retribution for the mercies received. This *David* was careful about, *Pſal.* 116. 1. And the Lord taxes good *Hezekiah* for the neglect of it, 2 *Chron.* 32. 24, 25. This conſiſts in a full and hearty reſignation of all to him, that we have received by Providence from him: and in our willingneſs actually to part with all for him, when he ſhall remand it.

Thus you ſee, how all the ingredients to praiſe,

have reſpect to Providences. But more particularly I will ſhew you, that as all the ingredients of praiſe have reſpect to Providences, ſo all the motives and Arguments obliging and engaging ſouls to praiſe, are found therein alſo. To this end conſider, how the mercy and goodneſs of God is exhibited by Providence, to excite our thankfulneſs.

(1.) That the goodneſs and mercy of God is let out upon his people in his Providences about them: and this is the very root of praiſe. It is not ſo much the poſſeſſion that Providence gives us of ſuch or ſuch comforts, as the goodneſs and kindneſs of God in the diſpenſing of them, that engages a gracious ſoul to praiſe, Pſal 63. 3. *Becauſe thy loving-kindneſs is better than life, my lips ſhall praiſe thee.* To give maintain and preſerve our life, are choice acts of Providences: but to do all this in a way of grace and loving-kindneſs, this is far better than the gifts themſelves: life is but the ſhadow of death without it: this is the mercy that crowns all other mercies, P*ſal.* 103. 4. It's this a ſanctified ſoul deſires God would manifeſt in every Providence about him, Pſal. 17. 7. and what is our praiſing of God elſe, but our ſhewing forth that loving-kindneſs, which he ſheweth us in his Providences? *Pſal.* 92. 1, 2.

(2.) As the loving-kindneſs of God manifeſted in Providences, is a motive to praiſe; ſo the *free* and *undeſerved* favours of God, diſpenſed by the hand of Providence, oblige the ſoul to praiſe. This was the conſideration that melted *David*'s heart into a thankful praiſing frame, even the conſideration of the free and undeſerved favours caſt in upon him by Providence, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *What am I? O Lord God: and what is my Fathers houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?* (*i. e.*) raiſed me by Providence from a mean condition to all this dignity: *from following the Ewes, to feed Jacob his people*, Pſal. 78. 70, 71. O this is it that engages thankfulneſs, *Gen.* 32. 10.

(3.) As the freeneſs of mercies diſpenſed by Providence, engageth praiſe: ſo the *Multitudes* of mercies heaped

heaped this way upon us, ſtrongly oblige the ſoul to thankfulneſs. Thus *David* comes before the Lord encompaſſed with a multitude of mercies to praiſe him, *Pſal.* 5. 7. We have our loads of mercies, and that every day, *Pſalm* 68. 19. O what a rich heap will the mercies of one day make, being laid together!

(4.) As the multitudes of mercies diſpenſed by Providence, oblige to praiſe; ſo the *tenderneſs* of Gods mercy manifeſted in his Providence, leaves the ſoul under a ſtrong obligation to thankfulneſs. We ſee what tender reſentments rhe Lord hath of all our wants, ſtraits and burdens, Pſal. 103. 13. *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* He is full of bowels, as that word *polusplagchnos* in *James* 5. 11. ſignifies. Yea, there are not only bowels of compaſſion in our God, but the tenderneſs of bowels, like thoſe of a Mother to her ſucking child, *Iſa.* 49. 15. He feels all our paines as if the apple of his eye were touched, *Zech.* 2. 8. and all this is diſcovered to his people in the way of his Providences with them, *Pſal.* 111. 2, 3, 4. O who of all the Children of God hath not often found this in his Providences? And who can ſee it, and not be filled with thankfulneſs? All theſe are ſo many bands clapt by Providence upon the ſoul, to oblige it to a life of praiſe. Hence it is, that the prayers of the Saints are ſo full of thankſgivings upon theſe accounts: 'tis ſweet to recount them to the Lord in prayer: to lye at his feet in an holy aſtoniſhment at his gracious condeſcenſions to poor worms.

The Sixth Motive.

THe due obſervation of Providence will endear Jeſus Chriſt every day more and more to your ſouls. Chriſt is the Channel of grace and mercy: through him are all the *decurſus & recurſus gratiarum*, all the ſtreams of mercy that flow from God to us, and all the returns

of praiſe from us to God, 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22. All things are ours upon no other title, but our being his.

Now there be ſix things in Providence, that are exceedingly endearing of the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt* to his people: and theſe are the moſt ſweet and delicious parts of all our enjoyments.

(1.) The purchaſe of all thoſe mercies which Providences convey to us, is by his own blood: for not only ſpiritual and eternal mercies, but even all our temporal ones are the acquiſition of his blood. Look, as ſin forfeited all, ſo *Chriſt* reſtored all theſe mercies again to us by his death. Sin had ſo ſhut up the womb of mercy, that had not *Chriſt* made an atonement by his death, it could never have brought forth one mercy to all eternity for us. It is *with him* that God *freely gives us all things*, Rom. 8. 32. Heaven it ſelf and all things needful to bring us thither, among which, is principally included the Tutelage and Aid of Divine Providence: ſo that whatever good we receive from the hand of Providence, we muſt put it upon the ſcore of Chriſts blood; and when we receive it, we may ſay 'Tis the price of blood: 'Tis a mercy riſing up out of the death of Chriſt: It coſt him dear, though it come to me freely: It's *ſweet* in the *poſſeſſion*, but coſtly in the *acquiſition*. Now this is a moſt endearing conſideration: did *Chriſt* dye, that theſe mercies might live; Did he pay his invaluable blood to purchaſe theſe comforts, that I poſſeſs? O what tranſcendent, matchleſs love, was the love of Chriſt! You have known Parents that have laid out all their ſtock of money to purchaſe Eſtates for their Children; but when did you hear of any that ſpent the whole ſtock and treaſure of their blood, to make a purchaſe for them? If the life of Chriſt had not been ſo afflictive and ſad to him, ours could not have been ſo ſweet and comfortable to us: 'tis through his poverty we are enriched, 2 *Cor.* 8. 9. Theſe ſweet mercies that are born of Providence every day, are the fruits of *the travel of his ſoul.*

Bona gratiæ & gloriæ, ac præ omnibus divinæ tutelæ opus, ac providentiæ ſuæ ſctum. Poli Synopſis in loc.

The ſanctification of all, is by our union with Chriſt

Chriſt: 'tis by vertue of our union with his perſon, that we enjoy the ſanctified gifts and bleſſings of Providence. All theſe are mercies additional to that great mercy *CHRIST, Matth.* 6. 33. they are given with him, as in *Rom.* 8. 32. this is the Tenure by which we hold them, 1 *Cor.* 3. 21. 22. 23. Look, what we loſt in *Adam*, is reſtored again with Advantage in *Chriſt*: immediately upon the fall, that curſe, *Gen.* 2. 17. ſeized upon all the miſerable poſterity of *Adam*, and upon all their comforts, *outward* as well as *inward*; and this ſtill lyes heavy upon them: All that Providence doth for them that are Chriſtleſs, is but to feed ſo many poor condemned wretches, till the ſentence they are under, be executed upon them: it is indeed bountiful and open-handed to many of them; and fills them with Earthly comforts; but not one ſpecial ſanctified mercy is to be found among all their enjoyments: theſe gifts of Providence do but deceive, defile and deſtroy them through their own corruptions, and for want of union with Chriſt, Prov. 1. 32. *The proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them.*

But when a man is once in Chriſt, then all Providences are ſanctified and ſweet, Tit. 1. 15. *Vnto the pure, all things are pure. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the treaſures of many wicked,* Pſal. 37. 16. Now Chriſt becomes an head of *Influence*, as well as of *Dominion*; and in all things he conſults the the good of his own members, *Eph.* 1. 22.

The diſpenſation of all our comforts and mercies, (3.) is by his direction and appointment. It's true, the *Angels* are employed in the Kingdom of Providence, they move the wheels, (*i. e.*) are inſtrumental in all the revolutions in this lower world; but ſtill they receive directions and orders from Chriſt, as you may ſee in that admirable Scheme of providences, *Ezek.* 1. 25, 26. *&c.* Now what an endearing meditation is this! What ever Creature be inſtrumental for any good to you, it's your Lord Jeſus Chriſt that gave the orders & commands to that Creature to do it;

and without it they could have done nothing for you: It's your head in Heaven that consults your peace and comfort on Earth: these be the fruits of his care for you. So in the prevention and restraints of evil, 'tis he that bridles in the wrath of Devils and men; he holds the reins in his own hands, *Rev.* 2. 10. 'Twas the care of Christ over his poor Sheep at *Damascus*, that stopt the raging Adversary who was upon the way, designing to destroy them, *Acts* 9.

(4.) The *continuation* of all your mercies and comforts. outward as well as inward, is the fruit of his Intercession in Heaven for you. For look, as the offering up of the Lamb of God a Sacrifice for sin, opened the door of mercy at first; so his appearing before God as a Lamb that had been slain, still keeps that door of mercy open, *Rev.* 5. 6. *Heb.* 9. 24. By this his intercession, our peace and comforts are prolonged to us, *Zech.* 1. 12, 13. Every sin we commit, would put an end to the mercies we possess, were it not for that caution which is put in for us by it, 1 John 2. 1, 2. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins*, &c. This stops all pleas, and procures new pardons for new sins. Hence it is *he saves to the uttermost*, to the last compleating act, *Heb.* 7. 25. New sins do not irritate our former pardons, nor cut off our priviledges setled upon us in Christ.

(5.) The returns and answers of all your prayers and cryes to Heaven for the removing of your afflictions, or supply of your wants, are all procured and obtained for you by Jesus Christ. He is the Master of your requests; and were it not that God had respect to him, he would never regard your cryes to him, nor return any answer of peace to you, how great soever your distresses should be, *Rev.* 8. 3, 4. 'Tis his name that gives our prayers their acceptance, *John* 15. 16. because the Father can deny him nothing, therefore your prayers are not denyed. Doth God condescend to hear you in the day of trouble; Doth he convince you by your own experience, that your prayers have *power with*

with God, and do prevail? O ſee how much you owe to your dear Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for this high and glorious priviledge!

(6.) The Covenant of Grace, in which all your comfortable enjoyments are comprized, and by which they are ſecured, ſanctified, and ſweetned to you, is made in Chriſt, and ratified by him betwixt God and you. Your mercies are all comprized in this Covenant, even your daily bread, *Pſal.* 111. 5. as well as your juſtification, and other ſpiritual mercies.

'Tis your Covenant intereſt, that ſecures to you what ever it comprizes, *Iſa.* 55. 3. hence they are called the ſure mercies of *David.*

Nay, this is it that ſanctifies them, and gives them the nature of ſpecial and peculiar mercies. One ſuch mercy is worth a thouſand common mercies. And being ſanctified and ſpecial mercies, they muſt needs be exceeding ſweet beyond all other mercies. On theſe accounts it was, that *David* ſo rejoiced in his Covenant Intereſt, though laden with many afflictions, 2 *Sam.* 23. 5.

But now all this hangs entirely upon Chriſt. The New Teſtament is in his blood, 1 *Cor.* 11. 25. and whatever mercies you reap from that Covenant, you muſt thank the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for them. Put all this together, and then think how ſuch conſiderations will endear Chriſt to your ſouls!

The Seventh Motive.

THe due obſervations of Providence *have a marvellous efficacy to melt the heart, and make it thaw and relent ingenuouſly before the Lord.*

How can a ſanctified heart do leſs, than melt into tears, whilſt it either *conſiders* the dealings of God from time to time with it: or *compares* the mercies received, with the ſins committed; or the *different* adminiſtrations of Providence towards it *ſelf* and *others!*

Let a man but ſet ſelf himſelf to think deliberately & cloſely of the wayes of Providence towards him, let him but follow the Tract of Providence as it hath led him all along the way that he hath gone, and if there be any principle of gracious tenderneſs in him, he ſhall meet with variety of occaſions to excite and draw it forth. Reader, go back with thy ſerious thoughts (1.) To the beginning of the wayes of God with thee, the mercies that brake out early in thy youth, even the firſt born mercies from the womb of Providence; and thou wilt ſay, What need I go farther? Here is enough, not only to move, but overwhelm my heart. *May I not from this time cry unto thee, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth,* Jer. 3.4. What a critical time is the time of youth? it's the moulding age; and (ordinarily) according to the courſe of thoſe leading Providences, after Providences do ſteer their courſe. What levity, raſhneſs, ignorance and ſtrong propenſions to ſin and ruine accompanied that age? How many being then left to the ſway of their own luſts, run themſelves into thoſe ſins and miſeries, which they never recover themſelves from to their dying day? Theſe, like the errors of the firſt concoction, are rarely rectified afterwards. Did the Lord guide thee by his Providence, when but a Child? Did he then preſerve thee from thoſe follies and miſcarriages, which blaſt the very bloſſom, and nip the bud, ſo that no good fruit is to be expected afterwards? Did he then caſt thee into ſuch families, or among ſuch company and acquaintance, as moulded and formed thy ſpirit to a better temper? Did he then direct thee into that way of employment, wherein thou haſt ſeen ſo large a train of happy conſequents ever ſince following thee? And wilt thou not from henceforth ſay, *My Father, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth*?

Or (2.) Let us but bring our thoughts cloſe to the Providences of after times, and conſider how the ſeveral changes and removes of our lives have been ordered for us: Things we never foreſaw nor deſigned

(but

(but much better for us, than what we did deſign) have been all along ordered for us. *The way of man is not in himſelf. Gods thoughts have not been our thoughts, nor his wayes our wayes.* Among the eminent mercies of thy life, Reader, how many of them have been meir *ſurprizals* to thee? Thy own projects have been thruſt aſide, to make way for better things deſigned by Providence for thee.

Nay, (3.) Do but obſerve the *Springs* and *Autumus* of Providence, in what order they have *flouriſhed* and *faded* with thee, and thou wilt find thy ſelf overpowered with the ſenſe of Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs: when neceſſity required, ſuch a friend was ſtirred up to help thee, ſuch a place opened to receive thee, ſuch a Relation raiſed up or continued to refreſh thee: and no ſooner doth Providence deprive thee of any of them, but either thy need of them ceaſes, or ſome other way is opened to thee. O the depth of Gods Wiſdom and Goodneſs! O the matchleſs tenderderneſs of God to his people!

(4.) Compare the dealings of Providence with you and others, yea, with others that ſprang up with you in the ſame generation, it may be, in the ſame families, and from the ſame Parents, it may be in families greater and more flouriſhing in the world than yours, and ſee the difference, upon many great accounts, it hath made betwixt you and them. I knew a *Chriſtian*, who after many years ſeparation, was viſited by his own Brother, the very ſight of whom, wrought upon him, much as the ſight of *Benjamin* did upon *Joſeph*, ſo that he could not refrain to fall upon his neck, and weep for joy; but after a few hours ſpent together, finding the ſpirit of his Brother, not only eſtranged from all that's ſpiritual and ſerious, but alſo very vain and prophane, he haſtened to his chamber, ſhut the door upon him, threw himſelf down at the feet of God, and with flowing eyes, and a melting heart, admired the diſtinguiſhing Grace of God, ſaying, Was not *Eſau Jacob*'s Brother? O Grace, Grace, aſtoniſhing Grace!

(5.) Compare the carriage of Providence towards you, with your own carriage towards the Lord; and it must needs melt your hearts to find so much mercy bestowed, where so much sin hath been committed. What place did you ever live in, where you cannot remember great provocations committed, and manifold mercies notwithstanding that, received? O with how many *notwithstandings* and *nevertheleſſes*, hath the Lord done you good in every place! What Relation hath not been abused by sin; and yet both raised up and continued by Providence for your comfort? In every place God hath left the marks of his goodness, and you the remembrances of your sinfulness: give your selves but leave to think of these things: and it's strange if your hearts relent not at the remembrance of them.

(6.) Or Lastly, Do but compare your dangers with your fears, and both with the strange out-letts and doors of escape Providence hath opened, and it cannot do less than over-power you with a full sense of divine care and goodness.

There have been dark clouds seen to rise over you, judgement even at your door, sometimes threatning your life, sometimes your liberty, sometimes your estates, and sometimes your deareſt relations, in whom it may be, your life was bound up; remember in that day, what faintness of spirit seized you, what charges of guilt stirring up fears of the issue within you: You turned to the Lord in that distress, and hath he not made a way to escape, and delivered you from all your fears? *Psal.* 34. 4.

Oh is your life such a continued throng, such a distracted hurry, that there is no room to be found with Christians to sit alone, and think on these things, and press these marvellous discoveries of God in his Providences upon their own hearts? Surely, might these things but lye upon our hearts, talk with our thoughts by day, and lodge with us at night; they would even force their passage down to our very Reins.

The Eighth Motive.

DUe observation of Providence will both beget and secure inward tranquillity in your minds amidst the vicissitudes and revolutions of things in this unstable vain world.

Psal. 4. 8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety.* He resolves the sinful fears of Events shall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious presages: he will commit all his concerns into that faithful fatherly hand that had hitherto wrought all things for him, and he means not to lose the comfort of one nights rest, nor bring the evil of to morrow upon the day, but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoyes the sweet felicity of a resigned will.

Now this tranquillity of our minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due consideration of Providence, as by any thing whatsoever. Hence it was, that our *Lord Jesus Christ*, when he would cure the *Disciples* anxious and distracting sollicitudes about a livelihood, bids them consider the care Providence hath over the Birds of the air, and the Lillies of the field, how it feeds the one, and clothes the other without any anxious care of theirs; and would have them well consider those Providences, and reason themselves into a calm and sweet composure of spirit from those considerations, Mat. 6. 27, 28, 29, 30. 31.

Two things destroy the peace and tranquillity of our lives, our *bewailing past disappointments*, or *fearing future ones.* But would we once learn prevision and provision to be divine prerogatives, and take notice how often Providence baffles those that pretend to it, causing the good they foresaw (according to their conjectures) coming to their hand, yet to balk them and flee from them: and the evil they thought themselves sufficiently secured from, to invade them. I say would

would we consider how Providence daily baffles these Pretensions of men, and asserts its own Dominion, it would greatly conduce to the tranquillity of our lives,

This is a great truth, that there is no face of Adversity so formidable, but being viewed from this station, would become amicable. Now there be several things in the consideration of Providence, that naturally and kindly compose the mind of a Christian to peace, & bring it to a sweet rest, whilst events hang in a doubtful suspense.

(1.) As First, The Supremacy of Providence, and its uncontroulable power in working. This is often seen in the good that it brings us in a way that's above the thoughts and cares of our minds, or labour of our hands. *I had not thought* (said *Jacob*) *to have seen thy face; and lo, God hath shewed me thy seed also* Gen. 48. 11. There is a frequent coincidency of Providences in a way of surprizal, which from no appearance, or the remotest tendency of outward causes could be foreseen, but rather falls visibly cross to the present *Scheme*, and posture of our affairs. Nothing tends to convince us of the vanity and folly of our own sollicitudes and projections, more than this doth.

(2.) The profound Wisdom of Providence in all that it *performeth* for the people of God. The Wheels are full of eyes, *Ezek.* 1. 18. (*i.e.*) there is an intelligent and wise Spirit that sits upon, and governs the affairs of this world.

Non eaco impetu volvuntur rotæ.

This Wisdom shines out to us in the unexpected, yea, contrary events of things. How often have we been courting some beautiful appearance that invited our senses, and with trembling shun'd the formidable face of other things, when notwithstanding the issues of Providence have convinced us, that our danger lay in what we courted, and our good in what we so studiously declined? This also is a sweet principle of peace and quiet to the Christians mind, that he knows not, but his good may be imported in what seemed to threaten

threaten his ruine. Many were the diſtreſſes and ſtraits of *Iſrael* in the Wilderneſs, but all was *to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end*, Deut. 8. 16. Sad and diſmal was the face of that Providence that ſent them out of their own land, into the land of the *Chaldeans*; yet even this was a project to do them good, Jer. 24. 5. How often have we retracted our raſh and headlong cenſures of things upon experience of this truth! and been taught to bleſs our afflictions and diſappointments in the name of the Lord. Many a time have we kiſſed thoſe troubles at parting, which we met with trembling. And what can promote peace under doubtful Providences more effectually than this?

(3.) The experiences we have had throughout our lives of the faithfulneſs and conſtancy of Providence, are of excellent uſe to allay and quiet our hearts in any trouble that befalls us. *Hitherto God hath helped*, 1 Sam. 7. 12. We never found him wanting to us in any caſe hitherto: this is not the firſt ſtrait we have been in: the firſt time that our hearts and hopes have been low. Surely, he is the ſame God now as heretofore, his hand is not ſhortend, neither doth his faithfulneſs fail. O recount in how great extremities former experience hath taught you not to deſpair!

(4) The conjectures Chriſtians may make of the way of Providence towards them, from what its former methods have been towards them, is exceeding quieting and comfortable. It's uſual with Chriſtians, to compare times with times, and to gueſs at the iſſue of one Providence by another. The Saints do know what courſe Providence uſually holds, and accordingly with great probability collect what they may expect from what in like caſes they have formerly obſerved. Chriſtian, examine thine own heart, and its former obſervations, and thou wilt find, as *Pſal.* 89. 30, 31, 32. that it's uſually the way of God to prepare ſome ſmart rods to correct thee, when either thy heart hath ſecretly revolted from God, and is grown vain, careleſs and ſenſual, or when thy ſteps have declined, and thou haſt turned aſide to the commiſſion of

of iniquity. And then when those rods have been sanctified to humble, reduce and purge thy heart, it's usually observed, that those sad Providences are then upon the change, and then the Lord changes the voice of his Providence towards thee, Jer. 3. 12, 13. *Go, and proclaim these words towards the North, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity*, &c.

If therefore I find the blessed effects of the rod upon me, that it hath done its work, to break the hard heart, and pull down the proud heart, and awaken the drowsie heart, and quicken the slothful. negligent, lazy heart; now with great probability I may conjecture, a more comfortable aspect of Providence will quickly appear, the *refreshing* and reviving time is nigh.

(5.) It is usual with Christians, to argue themselves into fresh reviving hopes, when the state of things is most forlorn, by comparing the Providences of God one with another.

(1.) It is a mighty composing meditation, when we compare the Providences of God towards the inanimate and irrational Creatures, with his Providences towards us. Doth he take care for the very Fowls of the air, for whom no man provides, as well as those at the door which we daily feed? Doth he so clothe the very Grass of the field? hear the young Ravens, when they cry for meat? and can it be supposed, he should forget his own people, that are of much more value than these?

(2.) Or if we compare the bounty and care that Providence hath expressed to the Enemies of God, how it feeds and clothes and protects them, even whilst they are fighting against him with his own mercies; it cannot but quiet and satisfie us, that surely he will not be wanting to that people upon whom he hath set his love, to whom he hath given his Son, and for whom he hath designed Heaven it self.

(3.) Or

(3.) Or Laſtly, It muſt needs quiet us, when we conſider, what the Lord did for us in the way of his Providence, when we our ſelves were in the ſtate of nature, and enmity againſt God. Did he not then look after us, when we knew him not? provided for us, when we owned him not in any of his mercies? beſtowed thouſands of mercies upon us, when we had no title to Chriſt or any one promiſe? and will he now do leſs for us, ſince we are reconciled and become his Children?

Surely, ſuch conſiderations as theſe, cannot but fill the ſoul with peace, and preſerve the tranquillity of it under the moſt diſtracting Providences.

The Ninth Motive.

Due obſervations of the wayes of God in his Providences towards us, have an excellent uſefulneſs and aptitude to advance and improve Holineſs in our hearts and lives. For,

The Holineſs of God is manifeſted to us in all his works of Providence, Pſal. 145. 17. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.* The Inſtruments uſed by Providence may be very ſinful & wicked, they may aim at baſe ends, and make uſe of wicked mediums to attain them; but it's certain Gods deſigns are moſt pure, and all his workings are ſo too. Though he permits, limits, orders and overrules many unholy perſons and actions; yet in all he works like himſelf; and his Holineſs is no more defiled and ſtained by their impurity, than the Sun-beams are by the noiſome exhalations of a dunghil, Deut. 32. 4. *He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his wayes are judgement; a God of truth, and without iniquity: juſt and right is he.* So that in all his Providences he ſets before us a perfect pattern of holineſs, that we might be holy in all our wayes, as our Father is in all his wayes. But this is not all. (1.)

His

(2.) His Providences if duely obſerved, promote Holineſs, by ſtopping up our way to ſin. Oh if men would but note the deſigns of God in his preventive Providences, how uſeful would it be to keep them upright and holy in their wayes? For why is it, that the Lord ſo often hedges up our way with thorns, as it is *Hoſea* 2. 6. but that we ſhould not find our paths to ſin? Why doth he clogg us, but to prevent our ſtraying from him? 2 Cor. 12. 7. *Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure, there was given me a thorn in the fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan to buffet me.* O 't is good to attend to theſe works of God, and ſtudy the meaning of them. Sometimes Providence croſſeth a hopeful thriving project to advance our eſtate, and fruſtrates all our labours and cares; Why is this? but to hide pride from man. Shouldſt thou proſper in the world, that proſperity might be thy ſnare, and make thee a proud, ſenſual, vain ſoul; the Lord Jeſus ſees this, and therefore withdraws the food and fuel from thy corruptions.

It may be thou haſt a crazy, diſeaſed, weak body; thou laboureſt under often infirmities: in this, the Wiſdom and Care of God over thy ſoul is manifeſted; for wert thou not ſo clogged, how probable is it, that much more guilt might be contracted? Your poverty doth but clog your pride; reproaches clog your ambition: want prevents wantonneſs: ſickneſs of body conduces to the prevention of many inward gripes of conſcience, and groans under guilt.

(2.) The Providences of God may be obſerved to conduce to our holineſs, not only by preventing ſin, that we may not fall into it; but alſo by purging our ſins when we are fallen into them, Iſa. 27. 9. *By this therefore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his ſin.* So *Dan.* 11. 33, 34, 35. they are of the ſame uſe that fire and water are for purging and cleanſing; not that they can purge us from ſin in their own vertue and power, for if ſo, thoſe that have moſt afflictions would have moſt grace alſo; but it is in the vertue of Chriſt's blood, and God's bleſſing upon afflictive Providences, that they purge us from ſin. A *Croſs* without

God would not rub ſo hard, if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures: he loves purity ſo.

without a *Chriſt* never did any man good. Now in God's afflictive Providences for ſin there are many things that tend to the purging of it. For

(1.) Such rebukes of Providence diſcover the diſpleaſure of God againſt us: the Lord frowns upon us in thoſe Providences. Our father is angry, and theſe are the tokens of it; and nothing works more to the melting of a gracious heart than this. Muſt not the heart of a Child melt and break whil'ſt the father is angry. O this is more bitter to our Spirits than all the ſmart and anguiſh of the affliction can be to our fleſh. See Pſal. 38. 1, 2, 3. *O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure: for thine arrows ſtick faſt in me; and thine hand preſſeth me ſore. There is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh becauſe of thine anger: neither is there any reſt in my bones becauſe of my ſin.*

well, he had rather ſee a hole, than a ſpot in his childs garment *Gurnalos* Chriſtian Armour, *par.* 2. *p.* 222.

(2.) By theſe rebukes of ſin, the evil of ſin is diſcovered more ſenſibly to us, and we are made to ſee more clearly the evil of it in theſe glaſſes of affliction which Providence at ſuch times ſets before us, than formerly we ever ſaw. Jer. 2. 19. *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee; and thy backſlidings ſhall reprove thee, know therefore and ſee that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* O the Gall and Wormwood that we taſte in it under God's rebukes for it!

(3.) Providence blaſts and fruſtrates all ſinful projects to the people of God: whoever thrives in them, they ſhall not. Iſa. 30. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And this alſo convinces them of the folly that is in ſin, and makes them cleave to the way of ſimplicity and integrity.

Holineſs is promoted in the ſoul by cautioning and warning the ſoul againſt ſin for time to come. Job 34. 31. *I have born chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more.* O happy Providences, how ſmart ſoever, that make the ſoul for ever afraid of ſin! ſurely ſuch rods are well beſtow'd. This gives God his end: and if ever we ſorrowed after a godly ſort, in the day of our troubles (4.)

troubles it will work this carefulneſs, 2 Cor. 7. 11. *Behold this ſelf ſame thing that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, what carefulneſs it wrought in you,* &c. O if ever a man have been under a ſanctified rod which hath ſhewed him the evil of ſin, and kindly humbled him for it; and a temptation ſhould again ſollicite him to the ſame evil: Why thinks he, what a madneſs is it for me to buy repentance at ſo dear a rate? Have I not ſmarted enough already? You may as well ask me, whether I will run again into the fire, after I have been already ſcorcht in it?

(5.) To conclude, Providences do greatly improve and promote holineſs by drawing the Soul into the preſence of God, and giving it the opportunity and occaſion of much communion with him. Comfortable Providences will do this, they will melt a man's heart in love to the God of his mercies, and ſo pain his bowels that he ſhall not be quiet till he have fouud a place to pour out his Soul in thankfulneſs to the Lord. 2 *Sam.* 7. 18.

Afflictive Providences will drive us to the feet of God, and there make us to judge and condemn our ſelves. And all this hath an excellent uſe to deſtroy ſin, and promote holineſs in the Soul.

The Tenth Motive.

LAſtly, *The Conſideration and ſtudy of Providence will be of ſingular uſe to us in a dying hour.* Hereby we treaſure up that which will ſingularly ſweeten our death to us, and greatly aſſiſt our faith in the laſt encounter. You find when *Jacob* dyed, what reflections he had upon the dealings of God with him in the various Providences of his life. See *Gen.* 48. 3, 7, 15, 16. In like manner you find *Joſhua* recording the Providences of God when at the brink of the grave: they were the ſubject of his dying diſcourſe, *Joſh.* 24. And I cannot but think it a ſweet cloſe to the life of any Chriſtian: It muſt needs ſweeten a death-bed to recount there the ſeveral remarkable paſſages of God's

God's care and love to us from our beginning to that day: to reflect upon the mercies that went along with us all the way, when we are come to the end of it. O Chriſtians treaſure up theſe inſtances for ſuch a time as that is; that you may go out of the world bleſſing God for *all the goodneſs and truth* he hath performed to you all your life long. Now the meditations of theſe things muſt needs be of great uſe in that day, if you conſider the following particulars.

(1.) The Time of Death is the time when Souls are uſually moſt violently aſſaulted by Satan with horrid temptations and black ſuggeſtions. We may ſay of that figurative, as it's ſaid of the natural Serpent, *nunquam niſi moriens, producitur in longum,* He never exerts his utmoſt rage till the laſt encounter; and then his great deſign is to perſwade the Saints, that God loves them not, hath no care nor regard for them, nor their cryes; though they pray for eaſe and cry for ſparing mercy, they ſee none comes. He handles them with as much roughneſs and ſeverity as other men; yea, many of the vileſt and moſt diſſolute wretches endure leſs torments, and are more gently handled than they. Pſal. 73. 4. *there are no bands in their death*, when as thou muſt go through a long lane of ſickneſs to the grave, and endure many deaths in one.

But what credit can theſe plauſible tales of Satan obtain with a Chriſtian who hath been treaſuring up all his life long the *memorials* of God's tender regard both to his wants and prayers, and that hath carefully remarked the evident returns of his prayers, and gracious condeſcenſions of God to him from his beginning to that moment? In this caſe his faith is mightily aſſiſted by thouſands of experiences which back and encourage it, and will not ſuffer the ſoul to give up ſo eaſily a truth which he hath ſo often ſenſibly felt and taſted. I am ſure (ſaith he) God hath had a tender fatherly care of me ever ſince I became his: he never failed me yet in any former ſtrait; and I cannot believe he will do ſo now. I know his love is like himſelf, un-

unchangeable. Joh. 13. 1. *having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end: for this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.* Psal. 48. 14. Did he love me in my youth, and will he cast me off in my decrepit age? *O God,* (saith the Psalmist) *thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works, now also, when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not,* Psal. 71. 17, 18.

(2.) At death the Saints are engaged in the last, and one of the most eminent works of faith, even the committing themselves into the hands of God, when we are lanching forth into that vast Eternity, and entring into that new state which will make so great a change upon us in a moment. In this Christ sets us a pattern, Luke 23. 46. *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit;* and having said thus he gave up the Ghost. So *Stephen* at his death, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and immediately fell asleep,* Act. 7. 59.

There be two signal and remarkable acts of faith, both exceedingly difficult, *viz.* its first act, and its last. The first is a great venture that it makes of it self upon Christ: and the last is a great venture too, to cast it self into the Ocean of Eternity upon the credit of a Promise. But yet I know the first adventure of the Soul upon Christ is much more difficult than the last adventure upon death; and that which makes it so is in great measure, the manifold recorded experiences that the Soul hath been gathering up from the day of its espousals to Christ unto it's dying which is (in a sense) its marriage day. Oh with what encouragement may a Soul throw himself into the arms of that God with whom he hath so long conversed and walked in this world! Whose visits have been sweet and frequent, with whom the soul hath contracted so intimate acquaintance in this world; whom it hath committed all its affairs to formerly, and still found him a faithful God; and now hath no reason to doubt, but it shall find him so in this last distress and exigence also.

At

At death the people of God receive the laſt mercies (3.)
that ever they ſhall receive in this world by the hand of Providence, and are immediately to make up their Accounts with God for all the mercies that ever they received from his hand. What can be more ſuitable therefore to a dying perſon, than to recount with himſelf the mercies of his whole life, the manifold receipts of favour for which he is to reckon with God ſpeedily: and how ſhall this be done without a due and ſerious obſervation and recording of them now? I know there are thouſands of mercies forgotten by the beſt of Chriſtians: a memory of braſs cannot contain them: And I know alſo that Jeſus Chriſt muſt make up the Account for us, or it will never paſs with God; yet it is our duty to keep the Accounts of our own mercies, and how they have been improv'd by us, for we are Stewards, and then are to give an Account of our Stewardſhip.

At death we owe an Account alſo to men, and (4.)
ſtand obliged (if there be opportunity for it) to make known to them that ſurvive us what we have ſeen and found of God in this world, that we may leave a teſtimony for God with men, and bring up a good report upon his wayes. Thus dying *Jacob* when *Joſeph* was come to take his laſt farewell of him in this world, ſtrengthened himſelf and ſate upon the bed, and related to him the eminent appearances of God to him, and the places where, *Gen.* 48. 2, 3. as alſo an account of his afflictions, *Ver.* 7. So *Joſhua* in his laſt ſpeech to the people makes it his buſineſs to vindicate and clear the truth of the Promiſes, by recounting to them how the Providence of God had fulfill'd the ſame to a title in his day. Joſh. 23. 14. *And behold* (ſaith he) *this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your ſouls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God ſpake concerning you: all are came to paſs unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*

And certainly 't is of great importance to the world, to underſtand the Judgements, and hear of the Expe-

periences of dying men. They of all men are presumed to be most wise and most serious: Besides, this is the last opportunity that ever we shall have in this world to speak for God. O then what a sweet thing would it be to close up our lives with an honourable Account of the ways of God! to go out of the world blessing him for all the mercies and truth which he hath here performed to us! how would this encourage weak Christians, and convince the Atheistical world, that verily there is a reality and an excellency in the ways and people of God!

(5.) At death we begin the *Angelical life* of praise and thanksgiving. We then enter upon that everlasting sweet employment; and as I doubt not but the Providences in which we were concerned in this world will be a part of that Song which we shall sing in Heaven, so certainly it will become us to tune our hearts and tongues for it whil'st we are here, and especially when we are ready to enter upon that blessed state. O therefore let it be your daily meditation and study what God hath been to you, and done for you, from the beginning of his way hitherto.

And thus I have spread before you some encouragements to this blessed work. Oh that you would be perswaded to this lovely and every way beneficial practice. This I dare presume to say, that whoever finds a careful and a thankful heart to record and treasure up the daily experiences of God's mercy to him, shall never want new mercies to record to his dying day. It was said of *Claudian* that he wanted matter suitable to the excellency of his parts: but where is the head or heart that is suitable to this matter? who can utter the mighty works of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise? *Psal.* 106. 2.

Thus I have through the aid of Providence dispatched the main design I aimed at in the choice of this subject. All that remains will now be speedily finished in some few Corollaries to be briefly noted upon the whole,

whole, and three or four practical Caſes to be ſtated. You have heard how Providence *performeth all things for you.* Learn thence,

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Firſt Corollary.

THat God is therefore to be owned by you in all that befalls you in this world, whether it be in a way of ſucceſs and comfort, or of trouble and affliction. O 'tis yonr duty to obſerve his hand and diſpoſal, When God gives you comforts, 't is your great evil not to obſerve his hand in them. Hence was that charge againſt *Iſrael*, Hoſ. 2. 8. *She did not know that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oil, and multiplied her Silver and Gold* (*i. e.*) ſhe did not actually and affectionately conſider my care over her and goodneſs to her, in theſe mercies. And ſo for afflictions, 'tis a great wickedneſs, when God's hand is lifted up not to ſee it. Iſa. 26. 11. *The Ox knows his owner, and the Aſs his maſters crib*, Iſa. 1. 3. the moſt dull and ſtupid creatures know their benefactors. O look to the hand of God in all; and know, that neither your comforts nor afflictions do ariſe out of the duſt, or ſpring up out of the ground.

Second Corollary.

IF God perform all things for you, *how great is his condeſcenſion to and care over his people! What is man* (ſaith Job, chap. 7. v. 17, 18.) *that thou ſhouldſt magnifie him, and ſet thine heart upon him? and that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Such is his tender care over you that he withdraws not his eye from you. See *Job* 36. 7. leſt any hurt you, he himſelf will guard and keep you day and night. Iſa. 27. 3. Should he withdraw his eye or hand one moment from you, that moment would be your ruine. Ten thouſand evils watch but

but for such an opportunity, to rush in upon you, and destroy you and all your comforts. You are too dear to him to be trusted in any hand but his own. Deut. 33. 3. *All his Saints are in thy hand.*

Third Corollary.

Learn hence how you are obliged to perform all duties and services for God, who performeth all things for you. It was the wish of a good man, *optarem id me esse Deo, quod est mihi manus mea*, Oh that I could be to God what my hand is to me, *Viz.* a serviceable useful instrument. Shall God do all things for you, and will you do nothing for God? Is Providence every moment at work for you, and will you be idle? To what purpose then is all that God hath done for you? Is it not the aim and design of all, to make you a fruitful people? If God plant, and fence, and water you by Providence, sure he looks you should bring forth fruit. Isa. 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. O that in return for all the benefits of Providence, you would say to God, as grateful *Elisha* said to the *Shunamite*, behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? 2 *Kings* 4. 13. and with *David*, *Psal.* 116. 12. *what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me!* He is ever doing you good; be you always abounding in his work. His Providence stands by you in your greatest distresses and dangers; don't you flinch from God when his service and your duty is compassed about with difficulties. O be active for that God who is acting every moment for you.

Fourth Corollary.

Doth God perform all things for his people? Do not distrust him then as often as new or great difficulties arise.

Why ſhould you ſo think he that hath don many things for you, will now do no more? Surely, the Lords hand is not ſhortned that it cannot *ſave, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear*; if any thing put a ſtop to his mercy, 'tis your iniquities, your diſtruſt and infidelity. *Iſa.* 59. 1. *How long will it be ere you believe him*? If a thouſand and ten thouſand of tryals and experiences of his tender care, faithfulneſs and love will cure this diſtemper in you, you have them at hand to do it. If the frequent confutations of this your diſtruſt by the unexpected breakings out of mercy for you under like diſcouragements will cure it, look back and you may ſee them. Certainly you have been often forced by Providence with ſhame and repentance to retract your raſh cenſures of his care; and yet will you fall into the ſame diſtemper again? Oh that you would once learn this great truth That no man ever wanted that mercy, which he wanted not an heart to truſt and wait quietly upon God for. You never yet ſought God in vain, except when you ſought him vainly.

The Fifth Corollary

Conſilia & preces non eoſi ne adhiberi, ut dei, per hæc quaſi impedimenta, mutentur decreta & deſtianus providentiæ curſus inhibeatur: ſed ut obſequium divinæ legi præſtando, & conſuetum providentiæ ordinem ob

DOth God perform all things for you? then ſeek God for all by prayer, and never undertake any deſign without him: Certainly, if he do not perform it for you can never have what you deſire and labour for: and though he have deſigned to perform this or that mercy for you, yet for theſe things he will be enquired of that he may do it for you: *Ezek.* 36. 37. reckon that buſineſs as good as done, that mercy as good as if it were in hand, that trouble as good as over, for the doing, enjoying, or removing whereof we have engaged God by prayer. 'Tis our folly to engage this inſtrument and that for us, to attempt this way and that to compaſs our deſign, and all the while forget him upon whoſe pleaſure all inſtruments & means

depend. That which begins not with prayer, ſeldom winds up with comfort. *The way of man is not in himſelf;* if it were, prayer might then be reckon'd loſt labour. O let him that performs all, be owned and acknowledged in all.

obſervando, conſcientia tranquillitur, & ſpe bona impletur. Wendelin. Theol. P. 186.

The ſixth Corollary

LAſtly, *If God perform all things for us, then it is our great Intereſt and concernment in all things to ſtudy to pleaſe him, upon whom we depend for all things.*

It is a grave and weighty obſervation of *Chryſoſtome.* Nothing (ſaith he) ſhould be grievous and bitter to a Chriſtian, but to provoke the diſpleaſure of God. Avoid that, and no affliction or trouble whatever can caſt down ſuch a prudent Soul; but even as a ſpark is eaſily extinguiſh'd in the Sea, ſo will the favour of God extinguiſh thoſe troubles. It is with ſuch a Soul (ſaith he) as it is with the Heavens; we think the Heavens ſuffer when they are overſpread with clouds, and the Sun ſuffers when it is eclipſed, but there is no ſuch thing, they ſuffer not when they ſeem to ſuffer. *Tranquillus Deus, tranquilla omnia.* Every thing is well, and ſhall be well, when all is well betwixt us and God. The great conſolation of the Saints lyes in this, that all that concern them is in the hands of there father. *Pene deſperaſſem niſi Chriſtus eſſet caput Eccleſiæ.* I had utterly deſpair'd (ſaid *Luther*) had not Chriſt been head of the Church. When he that *performs all things* is *our God, even our God* that delights in our proſperity, that rejoyces over us to do us good, what ample ſecurity is here in the greateſt confuſions and dangers! When one told *Bouromeus* that there were ſome that laid wait for his life, his anſwer was, *An Deus eſt in mundo pro nihilo?* What, is God in the World for nothing? And as notable was the reply of *Silentiarius* in a like caſe, *ſi Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo?* If God take no care of me, how do I li

live, how have I ſubſiſted hitherto? Though it ſeems a *Romance* to many (ſaith a late grave Author) yet we muſt either quit the Scripture, or give credit to this, that the moſt infallible Rules for one to raiſe his fortune and enſur a deſtiny that can controul the ſtars, are given forth there (*viz.* in the Scriptures) where that evidently is found, *Sapiens dominabitur Aſtris, & quomodo unuſquiſq faber poteſt eſſe fortune ſuæ.* A good man may even be his own Carver. O that we would but ſteer our courſe according to thoſe rare politicks of the Bible, thoſe divine Maxims of Wiſdom. Fear nothing but ſin. Study nothing ſo much as how to pleaſe God. Warp not from your integrity under any temptation. Truſt God in the way of your duty. Theſe are ſure Rules to ſecure your ſelves and your Intereſt in all the Viciſſitudes of this life.

Author of the fulfilling of Scripture. 2 *par. pag.* 223.

MY laſt work will be to ſtate threee or four practical caſes about this ſubject, and ſo I ſhall ſhut up this diſcourſe of Providence.

Firſt Caſe.

HOw may a Chriſtian diſcover the will of God and his own duty under dark and doubtful Providences;

In order to the clearing of this Caſe, we are to conſider, what is meant by the will of God; what by thoſe doubtful Providences, that make the diſcovery of his will difficult, and what rules are to be obſerved for the clearing up of Gods will to our ſelves under ſuch difficult and puzzling Providences.

As to the will of God, it falls under a two-fold conſideration, of his *ſecret* and *revealed* Will; this diſtinction is found in that Scripture, Deut. 29. 29. *The ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God, but thoſe things which are revealed belong unto us*, &c. The firſt is the rule of his own actions; the later (1.)

of ours: and this only is concerned in the Quere.

This Revealed Will of God is either manifeſted to us in his *Word*, or in his *Works*. The former is his *commanding* Will, the later his *effecting* or *permitting* Will; the one verſant about good, the other about evil.

In theſe wayes God manifeſts his Will to men, but yet with great variety and difference, both as to the things revealed, the perſon to whom he reveals them, and the degrees of clearneſs in which they are revealed.

(1.) As to the things revealed, there is great difference: for the great and neceſſary duties of Religion are revealed to us in the Word, with greateſt perſpicuity and evidence. About theſe there can be no heſtation; but things of a lower nature and leſſer concern are left more obſcure.

(2.) As to the perſons to whom God reveals his Will, there is great difference; ſome are ſtrong men, others babes, 1 *Cor.* 3: 1. Some have ſenſes exerciſed, others are of weak and dull underſtanding; and we know every thing is received according to the ability and meaſure of the perſon receiving it. Hence it is, that one mans way is very plain before him, he knows what he ought to do: the other is ever and anon at a loſs, blyious and uncertain what to do.

(3.) The manner of Gods revealing his Will to men is alſo very different. Some have had ſpecial, perſonal, and peculiar diſcoveries of it made to them. So had *Samuel* about the choice of the perſon whom he ſhould anoint King, 1 *Sam.* 9. 15. And ſo had *David*, 1 *Sam.* 23. 2. 4, 9, 11. 12. where you find upon his enquiry of God (likely by the *Vrim* and *Thummim*) God told him what was his duty as to that expedition, and what would be the event of it.

But now, all are tyed up to the ordinary ſtanding rule of the written Word, and muſt not expect any ſuch extraordinare revelations from God. The way we now have to know the Will of God concerning us in difficult caſes, is to ſearch and ſtudy the Scriptures,

Scriptures, and where we find no particular rule to guide us in this or that particular caſe, there we are to apply general rules, & govern our ſelves according to the Analogy and proportion they bear towards each other.

But now it often falls out that in ſuch doubtful caſes we are entangled in our own thoughts, and put to a loſs what courſe to take. We pray with *David*, that God would *make his way plain before us*, Pſal. 5. 8. Afraid we are of diſpleaſing God, and yet doubtful we may do ſo; whether we reſolve this way, or that. And this comes to paſs not only through the difficulty of the caſe, but from our own ignorance and inadvertency; and very frequently from thoſe *Providences* that lye before us, wherein God ſeems to hint his mind to us, this way or that, and whether we may ſafely guide our ſelves by thoſe intimations of Providence, is doubtful to us. (2.)

That God doth give men ſecret hints and intimations of his Will by his Providence, cannot be doubted; but yet Providences in themſelves, are no ſtable rule of duty, nor ſufficient diſcovery of the Will of God. We may ſay of them, as it is, Job 23. 8, 9. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himſelf on the right hand, that I cannot ſee him.*

If Providence in it ſelf be allowed to be a ſufficient diſcovery of Gods Will to us, then we ſhall be forced often times to juſtifie and condemn the ſame cauſe or perſon, foraſmuch as there is *one event happens to all*, and as it falls out to the good, ſo to the wicked, *Eccleſ.* 9. 2. Beſide, if Providence alone were the Rule to judge any action or deſign by; then a wicked undertakement would ceaſe to be ſo, if it ſhould ſucceed well; but ſin is ſin ſtill, and duty is duty ſtill, what ever the events and iſſues of either be.

The ſafeſt way therefore to make uſe of Providence in ſuch caſes is, to conſider them as they follow the commands or promiſes of the Word, and not ſingly and ſeprately in themſelves. If you ſearch the (3.)

Scriptures with an indifferent and unbyaſſed ſpirit; in a doubtful caſe, pray for counſel and direction from the Lord, attend to the dictates of Conſcience. And when you have done all, ſhall find the Providences of God falling out agreeably to the dictates of your own conſcience, and the beſt light you can find in the Word, you may in ſuch caſes make uſe of it as an encouragement to you, in the way of your duty: But the moſt ſignal demonſtrations of Providence are not to be accepted againſt a Scripture rule; no ſmiles or ſucceſſes of Providences may in this caſe encourage us to proceed; and on the other ſide, no frowns or diſcouragements of Providence ſhould diſhearten us in the way of our duty, how many ſoever we ſhould encounter therein. Holy *Job* could not find the meaning of God in his Works, yet would he not *go back from the commandments of his lips*, Job 23. 9. The like reſolution you find in *David*, to Proceed in his duty, and cleave to the Word, how many ſtumbling blocks ſoever Providence ſhould permit to be laid in way. *I am become* (ſaith he) *like a bottle in the ſmoke* (not only blackt, but withered up by troubles) *yet do I not forget thy Statutes*, Pſal. 119. 83. and again Ver. 87. *They had almoſt conſumed me upon earth: but I forſook not thy precepts.*

Paul by the direction of the Spirit was engaged to go to *Jeruſalem*, *Acts* 20. 22. After a clear revelation of the mind of God to him in that matter, how many difficult and diſcouraging Providences befell him in his way? The *Diſciples* at *Tyre* ſaid to him *by the Spirit* (though in that they followed their own ſpirits) *that he ſhould not go to Jeruſalem*, Acts 21. 4.

Then at *Ceſarea* he met *Agabus* a Prophet, who told him what ſhould befall him when he came thither, *Chap.* 21. 10. 11. all this will not diſſwade him, And after all this, how paſſionately do the Brethren beſeech him to decline that jonrney? *Ver.* 12. 13. Yet knowing his rule, and reſolving to be faithful to it, he puts by all and proceeds in his journey.

Well then, Providence in concurrence with the Word

Word may give ſome encouragement to us in our way; but noe teſtimony of Providence is to be accepted againſt the Word. If Scripture and Conſcience tell you, ſuch a way is ſinful, you may not venture upon it how many opportunities and encouragements ſoever Providence may ſuffer to offer themſelves to you, for they are onely permitted for your Tryal, not your encouragement: Take this therefore for a ſure Rule, That no Providence can legttimate, or juſtifie any moral evil. Nor will it be a plea before God for any man to ſay, The Providence of God gave me encouragement to do it, though the Word gave me none. If therefore in doubtful caſes, you would diſcover Gods will, govern your ſelves in your ſearch after it by theſe Rules.

Get the true fear of God upon your hearts, be really afraid of offending him, God will not hide his mind from ſuch a ſoul, Pſal. 25. 14. *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhew them his Covenant.* (1.)

Study the *Word* more, and the concerns and intereſts of the World leſs. The Word is a light to your feet, *Pſal.* 119. 105. (*i. e.*) it hath a diſcovering and directive uſefulneſs as to all duties to be done. & dangers, to be avoided: it is the great Oracle at which you are to enquire: treaſure up its rules in your hearts, and you will walk ſafely, *Pſal.* 119. 11. *thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not ſin againſt thee.* (2.)

Reduce what you know into practice, and you ſhall know what is your duty to practiſe, *Joq.* 7. 17. *If any man do his will he ſhall know of the doctrine* Pſal. 111. 10. *A good underſtanding have all they that do therin.* (3.)

Pray for illumination and direction in the way that you ſhould go; beg the Lord to guide you in ſtraits, and that he would not ſuffer you to fall into ſin. This was the holy practice of *Ezra*, *cqap* 8. 21. *Then I proclaimed a faſt there at the river* Ahava, *that we might afflict our ſelves before our God, to ſeek of him* (4.)

a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our ſubſtance.

Read the obſcure Texts of Providence with the Comment of the word, and we cannot make a falſe interpreation of them.

And this being done, follow Providence ſo far as it agrees with the word, and no farther. There is no uſe to be made of Providence againſt the word, but in ſubſerviency to it. And there are two excellent uſes of Providence in ſubſerviency to the word. (1.) Providences as they follow Promiſes and Prayer are Evidences of God's faithfulneſs in their Accompliſhment. When *David* languiſhed under a diſeaſe, and his Enemies began to triumph in the hopes of his downfall; he prays, *Pſal.* 41. 10. that God would be merciful to him, and raiſe him up; and by that, he ſaith, *he knew the Lord favoured him, becauſe his Enemy did not triumph over him, ver.* 11. this Providence he looked upon as a token for good, as elſewhere he calls it, *Pſal.* 86. 17. And (2.) Providences give us loud calls to thoſe duties which the Command lays upon us, & tells us when we are actually and preſently under the obligation of the Commands as to the performance of them. Thus when ſad Providences befall the Church or our ſelves, they call us to humiliation; and let us know that then the command upon us to humble our ſelves at the feet of God is in force upon us, *Micah.* 6. 9. *The Lords voice cryeth to the City, and the man of wiſdom ſhall ſee thy name, hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.* The Rod hath a voice; and what doth it ſpeak? Why now is the time to humble your ſelves under the mighty hand of God. This is the day of trouble in which God hath bid you to call upon him. And *econtra*, when comfortable Providences refreſh us, it now informs us, this is the time to rejoyce in God according the rule, *Eccleſ.* 7. 14. *in the day of proſperity be joyful.* Theſe precepts bind *always*, but not *to always.* It's our duty therefore and our wiſdom to diſtinguiſh ſeaſons, and know the proper duties of every ſeaſon: and Providence is an *Index* that points them out to us. Thus of the firſt Caſe.

Præcepta affirmativa obligant ſemper, non ad ſeperm.

The

The Second Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian be ſupported in waiting upon God whil'ſt Providence delays the performance of the mercies to him for which he hath long pray'd and waited?

Two things are ſuppoſed in this Caſe.

(1.) That Providence may linger and delay the performance of thoſe mercies to us that we have long waited and prayed for.

(2.) That during that delay and ſuſpenſion, our hearts and hopes may be very low, and ready to fail.

Providence may long delay the performance of thoſe mercies we have prayed and waited upon God for. (1.)

For the right underſtanding of this, know that there is a twofold term or ſeaſon fixed for the Performance of mercy to us. One by the Lord our God, in whoſe hand times and ſeaſons are, *Acts* 1.7. Another by our ſelves, who raiſe up our own expectations of mercies ſometimes meerly through the eagerneſs of our deſires after them, and ſometimes upon uncertain conjectural grounds and appearances of encouragement that lye before us.

Now nothing can be more preciſe, certain and punctual, than is the performance of mercy at the time and ſeaſon which God hath appointed, how long ſoever it be, or how many obſtacles ſoever lye in the way of it. There was a time perfixed by God himſelf for the performance of that Promiſe of *Iſrael's* deliverance out of *Egypt*; and it's ſaid *Exod.* 12.41. *At the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the ſelf ſame day it came to paſs, that all the hoſt of the Lord went out of the Land of* Egypt. Compare this with *Acts* 7.17, and there you have the ground and reaſon why their deliverance was not, nor could be delayed one day longer, becauſe *the time of*

the Promiſe was now come. Promiſes like a pregnant woman muſt accompliſh their appointed months, and when they have ſo done, Providence will Midwife the Mercies they go big withal into the world, and not one of them ſhall miſcarry.

But for the ſeaſons which are of our own fixing and appointment, as God is not tyed to them, ſo his Providences are not governed by them: and hence are our diſappointments. *We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of health, and behold trouble*, Jer. 8. 15. And hereupon is it that we fret at the delays of Providence, and ſuſpect the faithfulneſs of God in their performance. *But his thoughts are not our thoughts*, Iſa. 55. 8. *The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe* (*as ſome men count ſlackneſs*) 2 Pet. 3. 9. It is ſlackneſs if you reckon by our own rule and meaſure, but it is not ſo, if you reckon and count it by God's. The Lord doth not compute and reckon his ſeaſons of working by our *Arithmetick*. You have both theſe Rules compared, and the ground of our miſtake detected in that Scripture, Hab. 2. 3. *The Viſion is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it ſhall ſpeak, and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry.*

God appoints the time: when that appointed time is come, the expected mercies will not fail: But in the mean time, *though it tarry* (ſaith the Prophet) *wait for it, for it will not tarry.* Tarry, and not tarry, how ſhall this be reconciled? The meaning is, it may tarry much beyond *your expectation*, but not a moment beyond *God's appointment.*

(2.) During this delay of Providence, the hearts and hopes of the people of God may be very low, and much diſcouraged. This is too plain from what the Scriptures have recorded of others, and every one of us may find in our own experiences. We have an inſtance of this in *Iſa.* 49. 13, 14. in the 13. *Verſe* you have God's faithful Promiſe, that *he will comfort his people, and have mercy upon his afflicted.* Enough one would think to raiſe and comfort their hearts.

But

But the mercy promiſed was long in coming, they waited from year to year, and ſtill the burden preſſed them; and was not removed. And therefore *Ver.* 14. Zion *ſaid, the Lord hath forſaken me and my Lord hath forgotten me*, q. d. It's in vain to look for ſuch a mercy, God hath no regard to us, we are out of his heart and mind, he neither cares for us nor minds what becomes of us.

So it was with *David*, after God had made him ſuch a Promiſe, and in the time thereof ſo faithfully performed it, that never was mercy better ſecured to any man; for they are call'd, *the ſure mercies of* David, *Iſa.* 55. 3. yet Providence delayed the accompliſhment of them ſo long, and ſuffered ſuch difficulties to intervene, that he even deſpairs to ſee the accompliſhment of them, but even concludes God had forgotten him too, Pſal. 13. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?* And what he ſpeaks here by way of *queſtion*, he elſewhere turns into a poſitive *concluſion*, Pſal. 116. 11. *All men are Lyars, I ſhall one day periſh by the hand of* Saul. And the cauſes of theſe deſpondencies, and ſinkings of heart are partly from our ſelves, and partly from Satan. If we duly examine our own hearts about it, we ſhall find that theſe ſinkings of heart are

(1.) The immediate effects of unbelief. We do not depend and rely upon the word with that full truſt and confidence that is due to the infallible word of a faithful and unchangeable God. You may ſee the ground of this faintneſs in that Scripture, Pſal. 27. 13. *I had fainted unleſs I had believed.* Faith is the only Cordial that relieves the heart againſt theſe faintings and deſpondencies. Where this is wanting, or is weak, no wonder our hearts ſink at this rate, when diſcouragements are before us.

(2.) Our judging and meaſuring things by the rules of ſenſe, this is a great cauſe of our diſcouragements. We conclude, According to the Appearances of things will be their Iſſues. If *Abraham* had done ſo, in that great tryal of his faith, he had certainly loſt his

his footing; *but againſt hope*, (*i. e*) againſt natural probability, *he believed in hope, giving Glory to God*, Rom. 4. 18. If *Paul* had done ſo, he had fainted under his tryals, 2 *Cor.* 4. 16, 18. *We faint not* (ſaith he) *whil'ſt we look not at the things that are ſeen*, q. d. That which keeps up our ſpirits, is our looking off from things preſent and viſible, and meaſuring all by another rule, *viz.* the power and fidelity of God firmly engaged in the Promiſes.

(3.) In all theſe things *Satan* manages a deſign upon us. Hence he takes occaſion to ſuggeſt hard thoughts of God, and to beat off our Souls from all confidence in him, and expectations from him. He is the great makebate betwixt God and the Saints. He reports the difficulties and fears that are in our way with advantage, and labours to weaken our hands, and diſcourage our hearts in waiting upon God. And theſe ſuggeſtions gain the more credit with us, becauſe they are confirm'd and atteſted by ſenſe and feeling.

But here is a deſperate deſign carrying on under very plauſible pretences againſt our ſouls. It concerns us to be watchful now, and maintain our faith and hope in God. Now bleſſed is he that can reſign all to God, and quietly wait for his ſalvation. To aſſiſt the ſoul in this difficulty, I ſhall offer ſome farther help beſide what hath been formerly given under the *firſt Caution*, pag. 158. in the following Conſiderations.

Firſt Conſideration.

1. *Conſid.* Though Providence do not yet perform the mercies you wait for, yet you have no ground to entertain hard thoughts of God; for it's poſſible God never gave you any ground for your expectation of theſe things from him. It may be you have no *Promiſe* to bottome your hope upon; and if ſo, why ſhall God be ſuſpected and diſhonoured by you in a caſe wherein his truth and faithfulneſs was never engaged to you? If we are croſſed in our outward concernments, and ſee our expectations of proſperity daſhed; if we ſee ſuch

or

or ſuch an outward comfort removed, from which we promiſed our ſelves much; why muſt God be accuſed for this? theſe thing you promiſed your ſelves: but where did God promiſe you proſperity, and the continuance of thoſe comfortable things to you? produce his Promiſe, and ſhew wherein he hath broken it. It is not enough for you to ſay, There are general Promiſes in the Scripture, that *God will withhold no good thing*, and theſe are good things which Providence withholds from you; for that Promiſe, Pſal. 84. 11. hath its limitations, it is expreſly limited to ſuch as *walk uprightly*; and it concerns you to examine whether you have done ſo, before you quarrel with Providence for non-performance of it. Ah friend, ſearch thine own heart, reflect upon thine own ways; ſeeſt thou not ſo many flaws in thine integrity, ſo many turnings aſide from God, both in heart and life, that may juſtifie God, not only in withholding what thou lookeſt for, but in removing all that thou enjoyeſt? And beſides this limitation as to the *Object*, it's limited (as all other promiſes relating to externals are) in the matter or things promiſed by the Wiſdome and Will of God, which is the only Rule by which they are meaſured out to men in this World, (*i. e.*) ſuch mercies in ſuch proportions as he ſees needful and moſt conducible to your good; and theſe given out in ſuch times and ſeaſons as are of his own appointment, not yours.

God never came under an abſolute unlimited tye for outward comforts to any of us; and if we be diſappointed, we can blame none but our ſelves. Who bid us expect reſt, eaſe, delight, and things of this kind in this world? He hath never told us, we ſhall be rich, healthy and at eaſe in our habitations; but on the contrary, he hath often told us, we muſt expect *troubles in the world*, John 16. 33. and that *through many tribulations we muſt enter into his Kingdom*, Acts 14. 22. All that he ſtands bound to us by Promiſe for, is to *be with us in trouble*, Pſal. 91. 15. to ſupply our real and abſolute needs, Iſa. 41. 17.

When

When the poor and needy ſeek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thriſt, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Iſrael will not forſake them; and to ſanctifie all theſe Providences to our good at laſt, Rom. 8. 28. *All things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.* And as to all theſe things not one title ever did, or ſhall fail.

Second Conſideration.

2. *Conſid.* But if you ſay you have long waited upon God for ſpiritual mercies to your ſouls according to the Promiſe, and ſtill thoſe mercies are deferred, aud your eyes fail whilſt you look for them; I would deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider of what kind thoſe ſpiritual mercies are, for which you have ſo long waited upon God. Spiritual mercies are of two ſorts; ſuch as belong to the *Eſſence*, the very being of the new creature, without which it muſt fail: or to its *well being*, and the comfort of the inner man; without which you cannot live ſo cheerfully as you would. The mercies of the former kind are Abſolutely neceſſary, and therefore put into Abſolute Promiſes, as you ſee, Jer. 32. 40. *And I will make an everlaſting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* But for the reſt they are diſpenſed to us in ſuch meaſures, and at ſuch ſeaſons as the Lord ſees fit, and many of his own people live for a long time without them. The donation and continuation of the Spirit, to quicken, ſanctifie and unite us with Chriſt is neceſſary, but his joyes and comforts are not ſo. A Child of light may *walk in darkneſs*, Iſa. 50. 10. He lives by faith, and not by feeling.

Third Conſideration.

3. *Conſid.* You complain, Providence delayes to perform to you the mercies you have prayed and waited for, but have you right ends in your deſires after theſe mercies?

It

It may be that's the cauſe, you ask and receive not, *James* 4. 3. The want of a good *aim*, is the reaſon why we want good *ſucceſs* in our prayers. It may be we pray for proſperity, and our end is to pleaſe the fleſh; we look no higher than the pleaſure and accommodation of the fleſh; we beg and wait for deliverance from ſuch a trouble and affliction, not that we might be the more expedite and prepared for obedience, but freed of what is grievous to us, and deſtroyes our pleaſure in the world.

Certainly if it be ſo, you have more need to judge and condemn your ſelves, than to cenſure and ſuſpect the care of God.

Fourth Conſideration.

You wait for good, and it comes not; but is your will brought to a due ſubmiſſion to the Will of God about it? Certainly God will have you come to this before you enjoy your deſires. *Enjoyment* of your deſires is the thing that will pleaſe you, but reſignation of your wills, is that which is pleaſing to God: if your hearts cannot come to this, mercies cannot come to you. *David* was made to wait long for the mercy promiſed him, yea, and to be content without it before he enjoyed it, *Pſal.* 131. 2. he was brought to be *as a weaned Child*, and ſo muſt you. 4. *Conſid.*

Fifth Conſideration.

Your betters have waited long upon God for mercy, and why ſhould not you? *David* waited till his *eyes failed*, Pſal. 69. 3. The Church *waited for him in the way of his judgements*, Iſa. 26. 8. Are you better than all the Saints that are gone before you? Is God more obliged to you, than to all his people? They have quietly waited, and why ſhould not you? 5. *Conſid.*

Sixth

Sixth Consideration.

6. *Consid.* Will you lose any thing by patient waiting upon God for mercies? Certainly, not at all: Yea, it will turn to a double advantage to you to continue in a quiet submissive waiting posture upon God. For, (1.) Though you do not yet enjoy the good you wait for, yet all this while you are exercising your Grace; and it's more excellent to act Grace, than to enjoy comfort. All this while the Lord is training you up in the excercise of faith and patience, and bending your wills in submission to himself; and what do you lose by that? Yea, and (2.) When ever the desired mercy comes, it will be so much the sweeter to you: for, look how much faith and prayer hath been employed to produce it, how many wrestlings you have had with God for it, so many more degrees of sweetness you will find in it, when it comes. O therefore, faint not, how long soever God delay you.

Seventh Consideration.

7. *Consid.* Are not those mercies you expect from God worth the waiting for? If not, is it your folly to be troubled for the want of them: If they be, why don't you continue waiting? Is not all that God expects from you for the mercies he bestows upon you, that you wait upon him for them; You know you have not deserved the least of them at his hands. You expect them not as a *recompence*, but a *free favour*, and if so, then certainly the least you can do, is to wait upon his pleasure for them.

Eighth Consideration.

8. *Consid.* Consider how many Promises are made in the Word to waiting souls. One Scripture calls them *blessed that wait for him*, Isa. 30. 18. Another tells us, *none that wait for him shall be ashamed*,, Psal. 25. 3 (*i. e.*) they shall

ſhall not be finally diſappointed, but at laſt be partakers of their hopes. A third Scripture tells us, *they that wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength*, Iſa. 40. 31 a Promiſe you had need make much uſe of in ſuch a fainting time, with many more of like nature; and ſhall we faint at this rate in the midſt of ſo many cordials as are prepared to revive us in theſe Promiſes?

Ninth Conſideration.

How long hath God waited upon you, when you will comply with his commands, come up to your engagements and promiſes? You have made God wait long for your reformation and obedience; and therefore have no reaſon to think it much, if God make you wait long for your conſolation. We have our *How longs*, and hath not God his? We cry, Pſal. 6. 3. *But thou O Lord, how long?* Pſal. 13. 1, 2. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long ſhall I take counſel in my ſoul, having ſorrow in my heart daily? How long ſhall mine enemy be exalted over me?* But ſurely we ſhould not think theſe things long, when we conſider, how long the Lord hath exerciſed his patience about us. We have made him ſay, How long, how long? Our *unbelief* hath made him cry, *How long will it be ere they believe me?* Numb. 14. 11. Our corrupt hearts have made him cry, *How long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee*, Jer. 4. 14. Our impure natures and wayes have made him cry, *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* Hoſea 8. 5. If God wait upon you with ſo much patience for your duties, well may you wait upon him for his mercies. 9. *Conſid.*

Tenth Conſideration.

This impatience and infidelity of yours, expreſt in your wearineſs to wait any longer, as is it a great evil in it ſelf, ſo very probably it is that evil which obſtructs the 10. *Conſid.*

the way of your expected mercies: you might have your mercies sooner, if your spirits were quieter and more submissive.

And thus of the Second Case.

The Third Case.

How may a Christian discern when a Providence is sanctified, and comes from the love of God to him?

There are two sorts or kinds of Providences versant about men in this world, the issues and events of which are vastly different, yea, contrary to each other.

(1.) To some all Providences are over-ruled and ordered for good, according to that blessed Promise, *Rom.* 8. 28. not only things that are good in themselves, as Ordinances, Graces, Duties and Mercies; but things that are evil in themselves, as Temptations, afflictions, and even their Sins and Corruptions shall turn in the issue to their advantage and benefit. For though sin be so *intrinsecally* and *formally* evil in its own nature, that in it self it be not capable of sanctification; yet out of this worst of evils God can work good to his people; and though he never make sin the *Instrument* of good; yet his Providence may make it the *occasion* of good to his people; so that spiritual benefits may by the wise over-ruling of Providence be occasioned to the people of God by it.

And so for afflictions of all kinds, the greatest and sorest of them; they do work in the influence of Providence a great deal of good to the Saints, and that not only as the occasions, but as the Instruments and means of it, Isa. 27. 9. *by this shall the iniquity of* Jacob *be purged*, (*i. e.*) by the instrumentality of this sanctified affliction.

(2.) To others nothing is sanctified either as an Instrument or occasion of any spiritual good; but as the worst

worſt things are ordered to the benefit of the Saints, ſo the beſt things wicked men enjoy do them no good. Their Prayers are turned into ſin, *Pſal.* 109. 7. The Ordinances are the ſavour of Death, 2 Cor. 2. 16. The Grace of God turned into wantonneſs, *Jude v.* 4. Chriſt himſelf a rock of Offence, 1 *Pet.* 2. 8. Their Table a ſnare, *Pſal.* 69. 22. Their Proſperity their ruine, *Prov.* 1. 32. As perſons are, ſo things work for good or evil. Tit. 1. 15. *To the pure all things are pure, but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.*

Seeing therefore the Events of Providence fall out ſo oppoſite to each other upon the Godly, and Ungodly; every thing furthering the eternal good of the one, and the ruine of the other; it cannot but be acknowledged a moſt important caſe in which every Soul is deeply concern'd, whether the Providences under which he is, be ſanctified to him or no?

For the clearing of which I ſhall premiſe two neceſſary Conſiderations, and then ſubjoyn the Rules which will be uſeful for the determination of the queſtion.

And firſt, Let it be conſidered, that we cannot (1.) know from the matter of the things before us, whether they be ſanctified or unſanctified to us; for ſo conſider'd, *all things come alike to all; and no man knoweth either love or hatred by all the things that are before him.* Eccleſ. 9. 1, 2. We cannot underſtand the mind and *heart* of God, by the things he diſpenſeth with his *hand.* If proſperous Providences befall us, we cannot ſay, Herein is a ſure ſign that God loves me; for who have more of thoſe Providences than the people of his wrath? *Pſal.* 73. 7. *They have more than their hearts can wiſh.* Sure that muſt be a weak Evidence for *Heaven*, which accompanies ſo great a part of the world to *Hell.* By theſe things we may teſtifie our love to God; but from ten thouſand ſuch enjoyments we cannot get any ſolid aſſurance of his love to us.

And from adverſe afflictive Providences we cannot know his hatred. If afflictions, great afflictions, many

many afflictions, long continued afflictions should set a brand, or fix a Character of Gods hatred upon the persons on whom they fall; where then shall we find Gods people in the world? We must then seek out the proud vain sensual wantons of the world, who spend their days in pleasure, and say these are the men whom God loves.

Outward things are promiscuously dispensed, and no man's spiritual estate is discernable by the view of his temporal. When God draws the Sword, it may *cut off the righteous* as well as *the wicked*, Ezek. 21. 3.

(2.) Though the Providences of God *materially* considered afford no evidence of Gods love to us, yet the *manner* in which they befall us, and the effects and fruits they produce in us, do distinguish them very manifestly; and by them we may discern whether they be sanctified Providences, and fruits of the love of God, or no. But yet these effects and fruits of Providences by which we discern their nature, do not always presently appear; but time must be allowed for the souls exercise under them. As it is Heb. 12. 11. *Now no affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of Righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

The benefit of a *Providence* is discern'd as that of a *medicine* is, for the present it gripes, and makes the stomach sick and loathing; but afterwards we find the benefit of it in our recovery of health and chearfulness. Now the Providences of God being some of them comfortable, and others sad and grievous to nature, and the way to discern the sanctification and blessing of them, being by the manner in which they come and their operations upon our spirits; I shall consider the case as it respects both sorts of Providences, and shew you what effects of our troubles or comforts will speak them to be sanctified and blessed to us.

(3.) And first for sad and afflictive Providences in what kind or degree soever they befall us, we may warrantably conclude, they are blessings to us, and come

come from the love of God, when

They come in a proper ſeaſon, when we have need of them, either to prevent ſome ſin we are falling into, or recover us out of a remiſs, ſupine, and careleſs frame of ſpirit into which we are already fallen, 1 Pet. 1. 6. *If need be, ye are in heavineſs.* Certainly, it is a good ſign that God deſigns your good by thoſe troubles which are ſo fitted and wiſely order'd to nick the opportunity. If you ſee the Husbandman lopping a tree in the proper Seaſon, it argues he aims at the fruitfulneſs and flouriſhing of it; but to do the ſame thing at *Midſummer* ſpeaks no regard to it, yea, his deſign to deſtroy it. (1.)

When they are fitted both for *quality* and *degree* to work properly upon our moſt predominant corruptions, then they look like ſanctified ſtrokes. The Wiſdom of God is much ſeen in the choice of his rods. It is not any kind of trouble that will work upon and purge every ſin; but when God chuſes for us ſuch afflictions as like Phyſick are appropriated to the diſeaſe the ſoul labours under; this ſpeaks divine care and love. Thus we may obſerve, it's uſual with God to ſmite us in thoſe very comforts which ſtole away too much of the love and delight of our ſouls from God: to croſs us in thoſe things from which we raiſed up too great expectations of comfort. Theſe Providences ſpeak the jealouſie of God over us, and his care to prevent far worſe evils by theſe ſad but needful ſtrokes, And ſo for the degrees of our troubles, ſanctified ſtrokes are *ordinarily* fitted by the wiſdome of God to the ſtrength and ability of our inherent grace, Iſa. 27. 8. *in meaſure when it ſhooteth forth thou wilt debate with it: he ſtayeth his rough wind in the day of the eaſt wind.* It is an *Alluſion* to a *Phyſician* who exactly weighs and meaſures all the ingredients which he mingles in a potion for his ſick patient; that it may be proportionate to his ſtrength and no more: and ſo much the next words intimate, *by this therefore ſhall the iniquity of* Jacob *be purged.* (2.)

It

It is a good ſign our troubles are ſanctified to us, when they turn our hearts againſt ſin, and not againſt God. There be few great afflictions which befall men, but they make them quarrelſome and diſcontented. Wicked men quarrel with God, and are filled with diſcontent againſt him. So the Scripture deſcribes them, Rev. 16. 9. *They were ſcorched with great heat, and blaſphemed the name of God, which hath power over theſe plagues.* But Godly men to whom afflictions are ſanctified, they juſtifie God, and fall out with ſin, they condemn themſelves and give glory to God, Dan. 9. 7. *O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, but unto us confuſion of faces,* &c. And Lam. 3. 39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins?* Happy afflictions which make the Soul fall out and quarrel only with ſin.

(4.) It is a ſure ſign afflicting Providences are ſanctified when they purge the heart from ſin, and leave both heart and life more pure, heavenly, mortified, and humble than they found them. Sanctified afflictions are cleanſers, they pull down the pride, refine the earthlineſs, and purge out the vanity of the Spirit. So you read, *Dan.* 11. 35. it purifies and makes their Souls white: Hence it's compar'd to a *furnace* which ſeparates the droſs from the pure metal, Iſa. 48. 10. *Behold I have refined thee, but not with Silver: I have choſen thee in the furnace of affliction.* But for wicked men, let them be never ſo long in the *Furnace*, they loſe no droſs, *Ezek.* 24. 6. How many Chriſtians can bear witneſs to this truth! After ſome ſharp affliction hath been upon them, how is the earthlineſs of their hearts purged! they ſee no beauty, taſte no more reliſh in the world than in the white of an Egg. Oh how ſerious, humble, and heavenly are they, till the impreſſions made upon them by afflictions be worn off, and their deceitful luſts have again entangled them. And this is the reaſon why we are ſo often under the diſcipline of the rod. Let a Chriſtian (ſaith a late writer) be but two or three years without an affliction, and he is almoſt good for nothing: he cannot pray, nor

nor meditate, nor diſcourſe at that rate he was wont to do: but when a new affliction comes, now he can find his tongue, and come to his knees again, and live at another rate.

It is a good ſign afflictive Providences are ſanctified to us, when we draw near to God under them and *turn to him that ſmites us.* A wicked man under affliction *revolts more and more*, Iſa. 1. 5. *turns not to him that ſmites him*, Iſa. 9. 13. but grows worſe than before; formality is turned into ſtupidity and dedolency. (5.)

But if God afflict his own people with a ſanctified rod, it awakens them to a more earneſt ſeeking of God: it makes them pray more frequently, ſpiritually and fervently than ever. When *Paul* was buffeted by Satan, he *beſought the Lord thrice*, 2 Cor. 12. 8.

We may conclude our afflictions to be ſanctified, and to come from the love of God to us, when they do not alienate our hearts from God, but inflame our love to him. This is a ſure rule, Whatever ends in the increaſe of our love to God, proceeds from the love of God to us. A wicked man finds his heart riſing againſt God when he ſmites him; but a gracious heart cleaves the cloſer to him: he can love, as well as juſtifie an afflicting God. *All this is come upon us: yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falſy in thy Covenant: our heart is not turned back, neither have our ſteps declined from thy way: though thou haſt ſore broken us in the place of Dragons, and covered us with the ſhadow of Death*, Pſal. 44. 17, 18, 19. Here you have a true account of the temper and frame of a gracious ſoul under greateſt afflictions. To be *broken in the place of Dragons and covered with the ſhadow of death* imports the moſt diſmal ſtate of affliction: yet even then a gracious heart turns not back (*i. e.*) doth not for all this abate one drachm of love to God: God is as good and dear to him in afflictions as ever. (6.)

Laſtly, We may call our afflictions ſanctified when *divine teachings* accompany them to our ſouls, Pſal. 94. 12. *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and* (7.)

and teacheſt him out of thy law. Sanctified afflictions are *eye-ſalve*, they teach us ſenſibly and effectually when the Spirit accompanies them; the evil of ſin, the vanity of the creature, the neceſſity of ſecuring things that cannot be ſhaken. Never doth a Chriſtian take a truer meaſure both of his corruptions and graces, than under the rod. Now a man ſees that filthineſs that hath been long contracting in proſperity, what intereſt the Creature hath in the heart, how little faith, patience, reſignation, and ſelf-denyal we can find, when God calls us to the exerciſe of them. O 't is a bleſſed ſign, that trouble is ſanctified, that makes a man thus turn in upon his own heart, ſearch it, and humble himſelf before the Lord for the evils of it!

(2.) IN the next place let us take into conſideration the other branch of Providences which are comfortable and pleaſant. Sometimes it ſmiles upon us in ſucceſſes, proſperity, and the gratification of the deſires of our hearts. Here the Queſtion will be how the ſanctification of theſe Providences may be diſcovered to us? For reſolution in this matter, I ſhall for clearneſs ſake lay down two ſorts of Rules; one Negative, the other poſitive.

Firſt Negative.

(1.) It is a ſign, that comfort is not ſanctified to us, which comes not (ordinarily) in the way of Prayer. *The wicked boaſteth of his heart deſire, and bleſſeth the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not ſeek after God; God is not in all his thoughts*, Pſal. 10. 3, 4. Here you ſee Providence may give men *their hearts deſire*, and yet they never once open their deſires to God in prayer about it. But then thoſe gifts of Providence are only ſuch as are beſtowed on the worſt of men, and are not the fruits of love.

What-

Whatever ſucceſs, proſperity or comfort men ac- (2.)
nire by ſinful *mediums*, and indirect courſes, are not
nctified mercies to them. This is not the method in
hich thoſe mercies are beſtowed. *Better is a little*
ith righteouſnes, than great revenews without right,
rov. 16. 8. better upon this account, that it comes
h Gods way, and with his bleſſing, which never
ollows the way of ſin. God hath curſed the wayes of
ſin, and no bleſſing can follow them.

Whatever proſperity and ſucceſs makes men forget (3.)
God, and caſt off the care of duty, is not ſanctified
to them. It is unſanctified proſperity which lulls men
aſleep into a deep oblivion of God, Deut. 32. 13. 14.
15. 18. *He made him ride on the high places of the earth,*
that he might eat the increaſe of the fields; and he made
him to ſuck honey out of the rock, and oyl out of the
flinty rock, butter of Kine, and milk of Sheep, with
fat of Lambs, and rams of the breed of Baſhan, and
Goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and thou
didſt drink the pure blood of the grape; but Jeſurun
waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxed fat, thou art
grown thick, thou art covered with fatneſs: then he
forſook God which made him, and lightly eſteemed the
Rock of his Salvation. Of the Rock that begat thee
thou art unmindful, and haſt forgotten God that formed
thee. Rare ſumant fœlicibus aræ.

When proſperity is abuſed to ſenſuality, and me- (4.)
erly ſerves as fuell to maintains fleſhly luſts, it is not
ſanctified. See Job 21. 11. 12. 13. *They ſend forth*
their little ones like a flock, and their Children dance.
They take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoyce at the
ſound of the Organ. They ſpend their dayes in wealth,
and in a moment go down to the grave.

It's a ſign that proſperity is not ſanctified to men, (5.)
when it ſwells the heart with pride and ſelf-conceit-
edneſs, Dan. 4. 29: 30. *At the end of twelve moneths*
he walked in the Palace of the Kingdom of Babylon.
The King ſpake and ſaid, Is not this great Babylon
that I have built for the houſe of the Kingdom, by
the might of my power, and for the honour of my Majeſty?

(6.) That ſucceſs is not ſanctified to men, which takes them off from their duty, and makes them wholly negligent, or very much indiſpoſed to it, Jer. 2. 31. *O generation, ſee the Word of the Lord; have I been a Wilderneſs unto Iſrael? a land of darkneſs; Wherefore ſay my people, We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?*

(7.) Nor can we think that proſperity ſanctified, which wholly ſwallows up the ſouls of men in their own enjoyments, and makes them regardleſs of publick miſeries or ſins, Amos 6. 4, 5, 6. *They lye upon beds of Ivory, and ſtretch themſelves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midſt of the ſtall. They chant to the ſound of the Viol, and invent to themſelves Inſtruments of muſick like David. They drink wine in bowls, and anoint themſelves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joſeph.*

But then *Poſitively.*

(1.) Thoſe mercies and comforts are undoubtedly ſanctified to men, which humble their ſouls kindly before God in the ſenſe of their own vileneſs and unworthineſs of them, Gen. 32. 10. *And Jacob ſaid, I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies,* &c.

(2.) Sanctified mercies are commonly turned into Cautions againſt ſin, *Ezra.* 9. 13. they are ſo many bands of reſtraint upon the ſoul that hath them, to make them ſhun ſin.

(3.) They will engage a mans heart in love to the God of his mercies, *Pſal.* 18. 1. compared with the *Title.*

(4.) They never ſatisfie a man as his Portion, nor will the ſoul accept all the proſperity in the world upon that ſcore, Heb. 11. 26. *Eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures in Egypt: for he had reſpect unto the recompence of the reward.*

(5.) Nor do they make men regardleſs of Publick ſins or miſeries, *Nehem.* 2. 1. 2. 3. compared with *Acts* 7. 23.

(6.) It's a ſure ſign that mercies are ſanctified, when they make the ſoul more expedite and enlarged for God in duty, 2 Chro. 17. 5. 6. *Therefore the Lord ſtabliſhed*

ſhed the Kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought to Jehoſophat preſents, and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lift up in the wayes of the Lord, &c.

To conclude, That which is obtained by prayer, and returned to God again in due praiſe carries its own teſtimonials with it, that it came from the love of God, and is a ſanctified mercy to the ſoul. (7.)

And ſo much of this Third Caſe.

The Fourth Caſe.

How may we attain unto an evenneſs and ſteddineſs of ſpirit under the Changes, and contrary Aſpects of Providence upon us?

Three things are ſuppoſed in this Caſe.

1. That Providence hath various and contrary Aſpects upon the people of God.
2. That it is a common thing with them, to experience grear diſorders of ſpirit under thoſe Changes of Providence.
3. That theſe diſorders may be (at leaſt in a great meaſure) prevented; by the due uſe and application of thoſe rules and helps that God hath given us in ſuch Caſes.

That Providence hath various, yea, contrary Aſpects upon the people of God, is a caſe ſo plain, that it needs no more than the mentioning, to let it in to all our Underſtandings. Which of all the people of God have not felt this truth? Providence rings the changes all the world over. *He encreaſeth the Nations, and deſtroyeth them; he enlargeth the Nations, and ſtraitneth them again*, Job 12. 23. The ſame it doth with perſons, Pſal. 102. 10. *Thou haſt lifted me up, and caſt me down.* See what a ſad Alteration Providence made upon the Church, Lam. 1. 1, 12. *How doth the City ſit ſolitary that was full of people! How is ſhe become as a Widow! She that was great among the Nations, and* (1.)

Princeſs among the Provinces, how is ſhe become tributary! Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? Behold and ſee, if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. And how great an Inſtance was *Job* of this truth, *Job* 29. *per tot.* and 30. compared? How many thouſands have complained with *Naomi*, whoſe condition hath been ſo ſtrangely altered, that others have ſaid as the people of *Bethlehem* did of her, *Is this Naomi?* Ruth 1. 19, 20, 21.

(2.) Theſe Viciſſitudes of Providence commonly cauſe great diſorders of ſpirit in the beſt men. Look as intenſe *heat* and *cold* try the ſtrength and ſoundneſs of the conſtitution of our bodies, ſo the *alterations* made by Providence upon our conditions, try the ſtrength of our graces; and too often diſcover the weakneſs and corruption of holy men. *Hezekiah* was a good man; but yet his weakneſs and corruption was bewrayed by the alterations Providence made upon his conditions. When ſickneſs and pains ſummoned him to the grave, what bitter complaints and deſpondencies are recorded? in *Iſa.* 38. *per tot.* and when Providence lifted him up again into a proſperous condition, what oſtentation and vain glory did he diſcover? *Iſa.* 39. 2. *David* had more than a common ſtock of inherent grace, yet not enough to keep him in an equal temper of ſpirit under great alterations, Pſal. 30. 6, 7. *In my proſperity I ſaid I ſhall never be moved; thou hideſt thy face and I was troubled.* It is not every man can ſay with *Paul*, *I know both how to be abaſed, and I know how to abound every where, and in all things I am inſtructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and to be ſuffer need*, Phil. 4. 12. He is truly rich in grace, whoſe riches or poverty neither hinders the acting, nor impoveriſheth the ſtock of his graces.

(3.) Though the beſt men be ſubject to ſuch diſorders of heart under the changes of Providence; yet theſe diſorders may in a great meaſure be prevented by the due application of ſuch Rules and helps, as God hath given us in ſuch caſes.

Now,

Now, these *helps* are suited to a threefold *Aspect* of Providence upon us: *viz.*

1. Comfortable.
2. Calamitous.
3. Doubtful.

To all which I shall speak particularly and briefly.

Quest. 1.

HOw may we attain to an Eavenness & Steddiness of heart under the *comfortable* Aspects of Providence upon us? *Quest.* 1.

Under Providences of this kind, the great danger is, lest the heart be lifted up with pride and vanity, and fall into a drowsie and remiss temper. To prevent this, we had need urge humbling and awakening Considerations upon our own hearts; such are these that follow.

First Consideration.

These gifts of Providence are common to the worst of men, and are no special distinguishing fruits of Gods love. The vilest of men have been filled even to satiety with these things, Psal. 73. 7. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.* 1. *Consid.*

Second Consideration.

Think how unstable and changeable all these things are. What you glory in to day, may be none of yours to morrow, Prov. 25. 5. *Riches make themselves wings and flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* As the wings of a Fowl grow out of the substance of its body, so the cause of the Creatures transitorinesis in it self: It's subjected to *vanity*, and that vanity, like Wings, carries it away: they are but *fading flowers*, James 1. 10. 2. *Consid.*

Third Consideration.

The Change of Providences is never nearer to the people of God, than when their hearts are lifted up, or grown secure by prosperity. Doth *Hezekiah* glory 3. *Consid.*

in his Treasures? The next new he hears, is of an improverishing Providence at hand, *Isa.* 39. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Others may be left to perish in unsanctified Prosperity but you shall not.

Fourth Consideration.

4. *Consid.* This is a great discovery of the Carnality and corruption that is in thy heart: it argues an heart little set upon God, little mortified to the world, little acquainted with the vanity and ensnaring nature of these things. O you know not what hearts you have, till such Providences try them. And is not such a discovery matter of deep humilitation?

Fifth Consideration.

5. *Consid.* Was it not better with you in a low condition, than it is now? Reflect, and compare state with state, and time with time. How is the frame of your hearts altered with the alteration of your condition? So God complains of *Israel*, Hosea 13. 5, 6. *I did know thee in the Wilderness, the land of drought; according to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me saith the Lord*: *q. d.* You and I were better acquainted formerly when you were in a low condition; Prosperity hath estranged you, and altered the case. How sad is it, that Gods mercies should be the occasion of our estrangement from him?

Quest. 2.

Quest. 2. UPon the other side, it's worth considering how our hearts may be established and kept steddy under *Calamitous* and *adverse Providences.*

Here we are in equal danger of the other Extream, *viz.* despondency and sinking under the frowns and strokes of cross Providences. Now to support and establish the heart in this case, take three helps,

First

First Conſideration.

First, Conſider, That afflictive Providences are of great uſe to the people of God, they cannot live without them, The Earth doth not more need chaſtening froſts, and mellowing ſnows, than our hearts do nipping Providences. Let the beſt Chriſtian be but a few years without them, and he will be ſenſible of the need of them; he will find a ſad *remiſſion* and declining upon all his graces. 1. *Conſid.*

Second Conſideration.

No ſtroke of Calamity upon the people of God, can *ſeparate* them from Chriſt, Rom. 8. 35. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall Tribulation?* There was a time when *Job* could call nothing in this world but *trouble* his own: he could not ſay my Eſtate, my Honour, my Health, my Children; for all theſe were gone; yet then he could ſay, *my Redeemer*, Job 19. 25. Well then, there is no cauſe to ſink whilſt Intereſt in Chriſt remains ſure to us. 2. *Conſid.*

Third Conſideration.

All your calamities will have an end ſhortly. The longeſt day of the Saints troubles hath an end; and then, no more troubles for ever. The troubles of the wicked will be to Eternity; but you ſhall *ſuffer but a while*, 1 Pet. 5. 10. If a *thouſand* troubles be appointed for you, they will come to *one* at laſt, and after that no more: Yea, and though our troubles *be but for a moment, yet they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Let that ſupport your hearts under all your ſufferings. 3. *Conſid.*

Queſt. 3.

LAſtly, Let us conſider, what may be uſeful to ſupport and quiet our hearts under *doubtful Providences*, when our dear concernments hang in a doubtful ſuſpence before us, and we know not which way the Providence of God will caſt and determine them. *Queſt.* 3.

Now the beſt hearts are apt to grow ſolicitous and penſive, diſtracted with thoughfulneſs about the event and iſſue. To relieve and ſettle us in this caſe, the following Conſiderations are very uſeful.

Firſt Conſideration.

1. *Conſid.* Firſt, Let us conſider the vanity and inutility of ſuch a ſolicitude, Matth. 6. 27. *Which of yow* (ſaith our Lord) *by taking thought can add one Cubit?* We may break our peace, and waſte our Spirits, but not alter the Caſe. We cannot turn God out of his way, Job 23. 13. *He is in one mind.* We may by ſtrugling againſt God increaſe, but not avoid or lighten our troubles.

Second Conſideration.

2. *Conſid.* How often do we afflict and torment our ſelves by our own unquiet thoughts, when there is no real cauſe or ground for ſo doing? Iſa. 51. 13. ------ *And haſt feared continually every day, becauſe of the fury of the oppreſſor, as if he were ready to deſtroy, and where is the fury of the oppreſſor?* O what abundance of diſquiet and trouble might we prevent, by waiting quietly till we ſee the iſſues of Providence, and not bringing as we do the evils of the morrow upon the day?

Third Conſideration.

3. *Conſid.* How great a ground of quietneſs is it that the whole diſpoſe and management of all our affairs and concerns is in the hand of our own God and Father? No Creature can touch us without his commiſſion or permiſſion. *I know* (ſaith Chriſt) *thou couldſt have no power againſt me, except it were given thee from above,* John 19. 11. Neither Men nor Devils can act any thing without Gods leave; and be ſure he will ſign no order to your prejudice.

Fourth Conſideration.

4. *Conſid.* How great ſatisfaction muſt it be to all that believe the Divine Authority of the Scripture, that the faithfulneſs

fulneſs of God ſtands engaged for every line and ſyllable found therein? And how many bleſſed lines in the Bible may we mark, that reſpect even our outward concerns, and the happy iſſue of them all? Upon theſe two grounds, *viz.* that our outward conerns with their ſteddy direction to a bleſſed end is found in the Word; and this Word being of Divine Authority, the faithfulneſs and honour of God ſtands good for every Title that is found there. I ſay theſe are grounds of ſuch ſtability, that our minds may repoſe with greateſt ſecurity and confidence upon them even in the cloudieſt day of trouble. Not only your eternal ſalvation, but your temporal Intereſts are there ſecured. Be quieted therefore in the confidence of a bleſſed iſſue.

Fift Conſideration.

How great and ſure an expedient have the Saints ever found it to their own peace, to commit all doubtful iſſues of Providence to the Lord, and devolve all their cares upon him, Prov. 16. 3. *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed.* By *Works* he means any doubtful, intricate, perplexing buſineſs, about which our thoughts are rackt and tortur'd. Roll all theſe upon the Lord by faith, leave them with him, and the preſent immediate benefit you ſhall have by it (beſides the comfort in the laſt iſſue) ſhall be tranquility and peace in your thoughts. And who is there of any ſtanding or Experience in Religion that hath not found it ſo? 5. *Conſid.*

The Fifth Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian work his heart into a reſigning frame unto the will of God; when ſad Providences approach him, and preſage great troubles and afflictions coming on towards him?

For the right ſtating and reſolving of this important caſe. it will be needful to ſhew. (1.) What is not included and intended in the Queſtion. (2.) What it doth ſuppoſe and include in it, and laſtly, what helps

and directions are necessary for the due performance of this great and difficult duty.

First, *Negatively.*

As to the first, It must be premised that the Question doth not suppose the heart or will of a Christian to be at his own command and dispose in this matter: we cannot resign it, and subject it to the will of God whenever we desire so to do: the *duty* indeed is *ours*, but the *power* by which alone we perform it is *Gods*: We act as we are acted by the Spirit. It is with our hearts, as with *meteors* hanging in the air, by the influence of the Sun; while that continues they abide above, but when it fails they fall to the earth: We can do this, and all things else be they never so difficult, *through Christ that strengthens us*, Phil. 4. 13. But *without him we can do nothing*, John. 15. 5. he doth not say, without me ye can do but little, or without me ye can do nothing but with great difficulty, or without me ye can do nothing perfectly; but without me ye can do nothing at all. And every Christian hath a witness in his own breast to attest this truth: for there are cases frequently occurring in the methods of Providence, in which notwithstanding all their prayers and desires, all their reasonings and strivings, they cannot quiet their hearts fully in the dispose, and will of God; but on the contrary do find all their endeavours in this matter, to be but as the rolling of a returning stone against the Hill: till God say to the heart be still, and to the will give up, nothing can be done.

Secondly, *Affirmatively.*

(2.) Next, Let us consider what this case doth suppose, and include in it, and we shall find

That it supposeth the people of God to have a foresight of troubles and distresses approaching & drawing near to them: I confess 'tis not always so, for many of our afflictions, as well as comforts, come by way of *surprizals* upon us: but of times we have forewarnings of troubles both *publick* and *personal*, before

fore we feel them: as the weather may be diſcerned by the face of the Sky, when we ſee a morning Sky red and lowring, this is a natural ſign of a foul and rainy day, *Matth.* 16. 3. and there are as certain ſigns of the times, whereby we may diſcern when trouble is near, even at the door: And theſe forewarnings are given by the Lord to awaken us to our duties, by which they may either be prevented, *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. or ſanctified and ſweetned to us when they come. Theſe ſigns and notices of approaching troubles are gathered *partly* from the *obſervation* and collation of parallel Scripture caſes and examples, God generally holding one tenour and ſteddy courſe in the adminiſtrations of his Providences in all ages, 1 *Cor.* 10. 9. *partly* from *Reflections* Chriſtians make upon the frames and tempers of their own hearts, which greatly need awakening, humbling and purging Providences. For let a Chriſtian be but a few years or months without a rod, and how formal, earthly dead and vain, will his heart grow? And ſuch a temper preſages affliction to them that are beloved of the Lord, as really as the giving or ſweating of the ſtones doth rain. Laſtly, The ordering and diſpoſing of the next cauſes into a poſture and preparation for our trouble, plainly premoniſheth us that trouble is at the door. Thus when the ſymptoms of ſickneſs begin to appear upon our own bodies, the wife of our boſome, or our children that are as own ſouls, Providence herein awakens our expectations of death and doleful ſeparations: ſo when enemies combine together and plot the ruine of our liberties, eſtates, or lives, and God ſeemth to looſe the bridle of reſtraint upon their necks, now we cannot but be alarmed with the near approach of troubles, eſpecially when at the ſame time our conſcience ſhall reflect upon the abuſe and non improvement of theſe our threatned comforts.

The caſe before us ſuppoſeth, that theſe premoniti- (2.)
ons and fore-runners of affliction, do uſually very much diſturb the order and break the peace of our ſouls, they put the mind under great diſcompoſure the thoughts

thoughts under much distractions, and the affections into tumults and rebellion.

Ah how unwilling are we to surrender to the Lord the Loan which he lent us! to be disquieted by troubles when at ease in our enjoyments! How unwelcome are the messengers of affliction to the best men! we are ready to say to them as the Widow to *Eljiah, What have I to do with thee, O man (O messenger) of God, art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, & to slay my Son?* 1 *King.* 17.18. And this ariseth partly from the remains of corruption in the best souls, for though every sanctified person is come by his own consent into the Kingdom, and under the government and Scepter of Christ, and every thought of his heart *de jure*, and of right must be subjected to him, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. yet *de facto* the conquest and power of graces is but incompleat and in part, and natural corruption like *Jeroboam* with his vain men riseth up against it, and causeth many mutinies in the soul, whil'st grace like young *Abijah* is weak handed, and cannot resist them. And partly from the advantage Satan makes upon the season to irritate and assist our corruptions: he knows that which is already in motion, is the more easily moved. In this confusion and hurry of thoughts he undiscernedly shuffles in his temptations. Sometimes aggravating the evils which we fear with all the sinking and overwhelming circumstances imaginable. Sometimes divining and fore-casting such events and evils, as (haply) never fall out, Sometimes repining at the disposes of God as more severe to us than others. And sometimes reflecting with very unbelieving and unworthy thoughts upon the promises of God, and his faithfulness in them, by all which the affliction is made to sink deep into the soul before it actually comes. The thoughts are so disordered, that duty cannot be duly performed. And the soul is really weakned, and disabled to bear its tryal when it comes indeed: just as if a man should be kept waking and restless all the night with the thoughts of his hard journey which he must travel to morrow, and so when to

morrow,

morrow is come, he faints for want of reſt, mid-way his journey.

It is here ſuppoſed to be the Chriſtians great duty, under the apprehenſions of approaching troubles to reſign his will to Gods, and quietly commit the events, & iſſues of all to him, whatever they may prove. Thus did *David* in the like caſe and circumſtances, 2 *Sam.* 15.25,26. *And the King ſaid unto Zadock, carry back the Ark of God into the City. If ſhall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back again, and ſhew me both it and his habitation: but if he ſhall thus ſay, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as ſeemeth good to him.* (5.)

O lovely and truly Chriſtian temper! q. d. go *Zadock*, return with the Ark to its place, though I have not the *ſymbol*, yet I hope I ſhall have the *real preſence* of God with me in this ſad journey: how he will diſpoſe the events of this ſad & doubtful Providence I know not: Either I ſhall return again to *Jeruſalem*, or ſhall not: If I do, then I ſhall ſee it again, and enjoy the Lord in his ordinances there. If I do not, then I ſhall go to that place where there is no need or uſe of thoſe things. And either way it will be well for me, I am content to refer all to the divine pleaſure, and commit the iſſue, be it whatever it will be, to the Lord.

And till our hearts come to the like reſolve, we can have no peace within. *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed, Prov.* 16. 3. By works he means not only every enterprize and buſineſs we *undertake*, but every puzzyling, intricate, and doubtful event we *fear*. Theſe being once committed by an act of faith, and our wills reſigned unto his, beſides the comfort we ſhall have in the iſſue, we ſhall have the preſent advantage of a well compoſed, and peaceful Spirit.

But this reſignation is the difficulty; no doubt of peace could we once bring our hearts to that. And therefore.

I ſhall here ſubjoin ſuch helps and directions, as may through

through Gods bleſſing, in the faithful uſe of them, aſſiſt and facilitate this great and difficult work.

First Help.

And firſt, *Labour to work into your hearts a deep and fixed ſenſe of the infinite wiſdom of God, and your own folly and ignorance.* This will make reſignation eaſie to you: whatſoever the Lord doth is by counſel, *Eph.* 1. 11. his underſtanding is infinite, *Pſal.* 147. 5. his thoughts are very deep, *Pſal.* 92. 5. but as for man, yea the wiſeſt among men, how little doth his underſtanding penetrate the works and deſigns of Providence? And how oft are we forced to retract our raſh opinions, and confeſs our miſtakes? acknowledging that if Providence had not ſeen with better eyes than ours, and looked farther than we did we had precipitated our ſelves into a thouſand miſchiefs, which by its wiſdom and care we have eſcaped. It's well for us that the *ſeven eyes of Providence* are ever awake, and looking out for our good. Now if one creature can and ought to be guided and governed by another that is more wiſe and skilful than himſelf, as the *Client* by his learned *Counſel*, the *Patient* by his skilful *Phyſician*, much more ſhould every creature give up his weak reaſon, and ſhallow underſtanding to the infinite wiſdom of the omniſcient God.

* *O quàm ſapiens argumentatrix ſibi videtur arroganta humana; præſertim cum aliquid de gaudiis metuit amittere* Tertu.

It's nothing but our pride and arrogancy overvaluing our own underſtandings that m kes reſignation ſo hard. * Carnal reaſon ſeems to it ſelf a wiſe diſputant about the concerns of the fleſh, but how often hath Providence baffled it? The more humility, the more reſignation.

How few of our mercies and comforts have been foreſeen by us? our own projects have come to nothing, and that which we never thought on, or contrived hath taken place; not our choice of the ground, or skill in weighing and delivering the *Bowl*, but ſome unforeſeen Providence, like a rub in the *Green* was that which made the caſt.

Second

Second Help.

Deeply conſider the ſinfulneſs and vanity of torturing your own thoughts about the iſſues of doubtful Providences.

(1.) There is much ſin in ſo doing: for all our anxious and ſolicitous motions what are they other than the immediate iſſues and fruits of pride and unbelief? There is not a greater diſcovery of pride in the world, than in the conteſts of our wills with the Will of God. It's a preſumptuous invading of Gods Prerogative, to dictate to his Providence, and preſcribe to his Wiſdom.

(2.) There is a great deal of vanity in it: all the thoughtfulneſs in the world will not make one hair white or black: all our diſcontents will not prevail with God to call back (or as the word may be rendered) make void his Word, *Iſa.* 31. 2. he is in one mind, *Job.* 23.13. the thoughts of his mind are from everlaſting, *Pſal.* 33.11.

Third Help.

Set before you thoſe choiſe Scripture patterns of ſubmiſſion to the Lords will in as deep, yea, much deeper points of ſelf-denyal than this before you, and ſhame your ſelves out of this quarrelling temper with Providence.

You know what a cloſe tryal that Providence was to *Abraham*, that called him from his native Countrey and Fathers houſe, to go he knew not whither; and yet it's ſaid in *Iſa.* 41. 2. he came to Gods foot, as readily obeying his call, as a ſervant when his Maſter knocks for him with his foot

Paul's voyage to *Jeruſalem*, had a diſmal aſpect upon himſelf, he could expect nothing but bonds and priſons, as he tells us, *Acts* 20. 23. and a great tryal it was to the *Saints*, who could not tell how to give up ſuch a *Miniſter*, yet he reſigns up his will to Gods, *Acts* 20. 22. and ſo do they, Acts 21. 14. *The Will of the Lord be done.*

But far beyond theſe, and all other patterns, what an example

example hath our dear *Lord Jesus* set before us in the deepest point of self-denyal that ever was in the world. When the Father gave the Cup of sufferings into his hands in the garden, *Mark* 14. 36. a cup of wrath, the wrath of the great and terrible God, and that without mixture: the very taste whereof, put Nature into an Agony and astonishment, a sore amazement, a bloody sweat; and forced from him that vehement and sad cry, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass;* yet still with submission, *never theless not may will, but thine be done.* O blessed pattern of obedience, and resignation to the pleasure of God! What is your case to this?

Fourth Help.

Study the singular benefits and advantages of a Will resigned up, and melted into the Will of God.

(1.) Such a Spirit hath a continual *Sabbath* within it self: the thoughts are established, *Prov.* 16. 3. and truly, till a man come to this, he doth but too much resemble the *Devil*, who is a restless Spirit, seeking rest, but finding none.

It was an excellent expression of *Luther*, to one that was much perplexed in his spirit about the doubtfull events of some affairs of his that were then depending: *Dominus tua omnia faciat, & tu nihil facias sed sis Sabbatum Christi:* (*i. e.*) The Lord shall do all for thee, and thou shalt do nothing, but be the Sabbath of Christ. It is by this means that the Lord *gives his beloved sleep*, Psal. 127. 2. he means not the sleep of the body, but of the Spirit. *Fideles* (saith One upon that place) *etsi vitam agant laboiosam, compositis tamen & tranquillis animis in fidei silentio see continent, ac si dormirent:* (*i. e.*) Though believers live in the midst of many troubles here, yet with quiet and composed minds they keep themselves in the silence of faith, as though they were asleep.

(2.) Besides, it fits a mans spirit for communion with God in all his afflictions, and this alleviates and sweetens them beyond any thing in the world.

(3.) And

(3.) And ſurely a man is never nearer the mercy he deſires, or the deliverance he expects, (as One truly obſerves) than when his ſoul is brought into a ſubmiſſive temper. *David* was never nearer the Kingdom, than when he became as a weaned Child.

Fift Help.

Laſtly, *Think how repugnant an unſubmiſſive temper is both to your prayers and profeſſions.*

You pray that the Will of God may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, and yet when it ſeems to croſs your wills or intereſts, you ſtruggle and fret againſt it. You profeſs to have committed your ſouls to his keeping, and to leave your eternal concerns in his hands; and yet cannot commit things infinitely leſs valuable unto him. How contradictory are theſe things!

Your Profeſſion as Chriſtians, ſpeaks you to be led by the Spirit, but this practice ſpeaks you to follow the perverſe counſels of your own ſpirits. O then regret no more, diſpute no more, but lye down meekly at your Fathes feet, aud ſay in all caſes and at all times, *the Will of the Lord be done.*

AND thus I have through the Aid of Providence performed what I deſigned to ſpeak from this Scripture. I acknowledge, my performances have been accompanied with much weakneſs, yet have endeavoured to ſpeak of Providence the things that are right. Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath thus far aſſiſted and protected me in this work.

How Providence will diſpoſe of my life, liberty and labours for time to come, I know not, but I cheerfully commit all to him, who hath hitherto performed all things for me.

FINIS.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

IN consideration of the great and manifold advantages resulting from an humble and heedful observation of Providence, I cannot but judge it the concernment of Christians that have time and ability for such a work, to keep written Memorials, or *Journals* of Providences by them, for their own and others use and benefit. For want of collecting and communicating such observations, not only our selves, but the Church of God is damnified and impoverished.

Some say, the Art of *Medicine* was thus acquired and perfected: when any one had met with some rare *Physical Herb*, and accidentally discovered the vertues of it, he would post it up in some publick place; and so the *Physician* attained his skill, by a Collection of those posted Experiments and Receipts.

I am not for posting up all that a Christian knows or meets with in his Experience, for (as I have said before) *Non est religio, ubi omnia patent.* Religion doth not lay all open; but yet there is a prudent, humble and seasonable communication of our Experiences and observations of Providence, which is exceeding beneficial both to our selves and our brethren.

If Christians in reading the Scriptures, would judiciously collect and record the Providences they shall meet with there, and (if destitute of other helps) but add those that have fallen out in their own time and experience; O what a precious Treasure would these make? How would it antidote their souls against the spreading Atheism of these dayes, and satisfie them, beyond what many other Arguments can do, that *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.*

Whilst this Work was under my hand, I was both delighted and assisted by a Pious and Useful *Essay* of an unknown Author, who hath to very good purpose improved many Scriptural passages of Providence, which seem to lye out of the road of common observation: Some passages I have noted out of it, which have been, sweet to me. And O that Christians would every where set themselves to such work! Providence carries our lives,

Mr. *T. C.* in his *Isagoge.*

lives, liberties and concernments in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its *Cupbroad*, your money in its *Purſe*, your ſafety in its enfolding *Arms*; and ſure it is the leaſt part of what you owe, to record the favours you receive at its hands. More particularly,

(1.) Truſt not your ſlippery memories with ſuch a multitude of remarkable paſſages of Providence as you have, and ſhall meet with in your way to Heaven. It's true, things that greatly affect us, are not eaſily forgotten by us; and yet, how ordinary is it for new impreſſions to raze out former ones? It was a ſaying of that Worthy man Dr. *Harris*, My memory (ſaid he) never failed me in all my life; for indeed, I durſt never truſt it. Written memorials ſecure us againſt that hazard; and beſides, makes them uſeful to others when we are gone. So that you carry not away all your treaſure to heaven with you, but leave theſe choice Legacies to your ſurviving friends. Certainly it were not ſo great a loſs, to loſe your Silver, your Goods and Chattels, as it is to loſe your Experiences which God hath this way given you in this world.

(2.) Take heed of claſping up thoſe rich treaſures in a Book, and thinking it enough to have noted them there: but have frequent recourſe to them, as oft as new wants, fears or difficulties ariſe, and aſſault you. Now, it's ſeaſonable to conſider and reflect, Was I never ſo diſtreſſed before? Is this the firſt plunge that ever befell me? *Let me conſider the dayes of old, the years of ancient times*, as *Aſaph* did, Pſal. 77. 5.

(3.) Laſtly, Beware of ſlighting former ſtraits and dangers in compariſon with preſent ones. That which is next us, alwayes appears greateſt to us: and as time removes us farther and farther from our former mercies or dangers, ſo they leſſen in our eyes, juſt as the Land from which they ſail, doth to *Sea-men*. Know that your dangers have been as great, and your fears no leſs formerly than now. Make it as much your buſineſs, to preſerve the ſenſe and value, as the memory of former Providences, and the fruit will be ſweet to you.

FINIS.

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